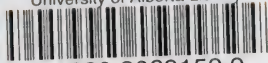


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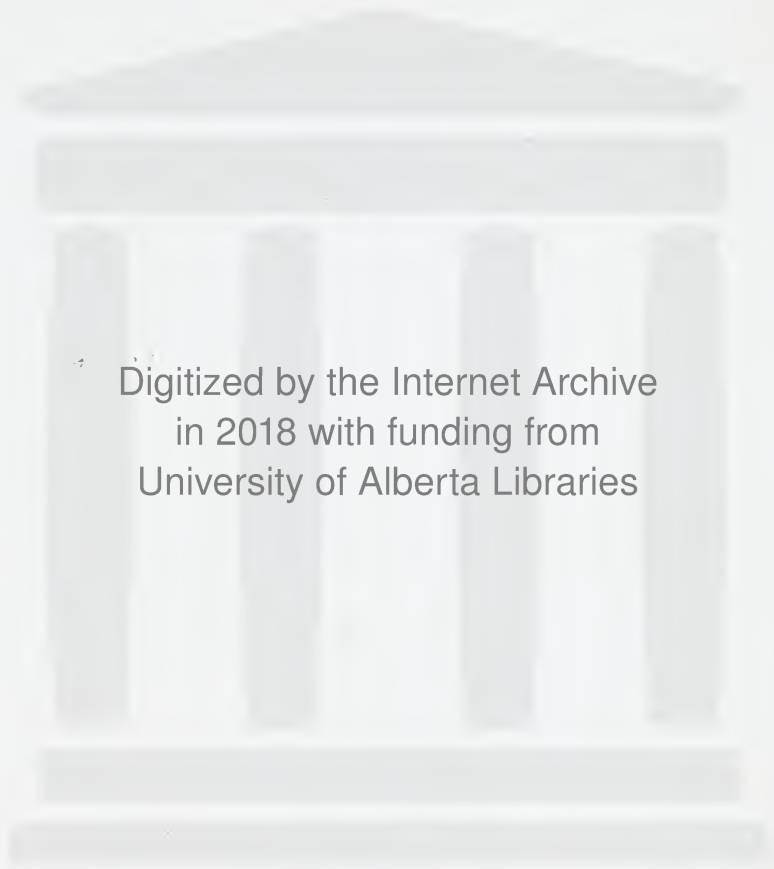
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JEWISH MESSIANISM
AND ITS LATER DEVELOPMENTS

A Dissertation
submitted to the B. D. Committee of the
Senate of the University of Alberta
in candidacy for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by

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INTRODUCTION

An almost inevitable feature of the cruder form of nationalism is the hope held by members of the nation that they will some day see their country dominant in world affairs, whether it be politically, economically or spiritually. In this hope the Hebrew people were no exception, belief in the ultimate supremacy of Israel over other nations being a prominent factor in the Jewish religion from comparatively ancient times. Since this is so, it would be well to examine this belief, or hope, as it might better be called. How did it originate, in what form, and when? Then, after considering its roots, we can follow its growth and changes down to the present day.

It is an undeniable fact that the Jews considered themselves favoured in the sight of Yahweh from earliest times. In their nomadic days they held to the desert religion -- worship of a tribal god who in some way was a blood relation of the members of the tribe. Their god led them into battle, watched over their fortunes, caused their misfortunes when they displeased him, and in general was the source of all their rewards and punishments, prosperity and suffering. Then, at the time when their

nomadic era was nearing its end, and the people were looking with envy at the comparatively easy life of the agriculturalists in Canaan, their leader, Moses, was won over to the god of his father-in-law, Jethro, and took the religion of Yahweh to his people. Still, however, they held to their tribalism in religion, and Yahweh became the god of the Jewish nation alone. Naturally, the people believed that Yahweh would help them, give them good fortune and prosperity and in every way show that He was the most powerful god in existence by raising up His people to the most prominent position in the international scene. At times this trust thrived with apparent justification, as in the time of the united kingdom under David particularly, when their fortunes rose, Canaan was thoroughly conquered, and all portents pointed towards a glorious future.

Such conditions, however, never last in international affairs, nor did they last in the case of the Hebrew kingdom. Gradually but steadily the foundations under their kingdom shook and crumbled, ending in the final captivity of the whole Jewish community in 586 B.C. at the hands of powerful Babylon. The realization was forced on the people that, like it or not, their God was not prospering them in the present. Nevertheless, their belief in Yahweh's favour did not die: it merely shifted

from the present to the future, often strongly connected with the hope of restoration of the Davidic dynasty, when Yahweh would show His favour on them, and His power over all the nations, since by this time Israel had progressed to a monotheistic religion, more or less international in its outlook. This is the belief that has come to be termed the Messianic hope, although, as will be seen, the personal element implied by the term Messianic was not always present, and it is with this belief that we shall concern ourselves.

"Three factors contributed to the spread of Messianic belief in Israel: the loss of national independence and the attendant deprivations, the will to live dominantly and triumphantly as a rehabilitated people in its national home and the unfaltering faith in divine justice by whose eternal canons the national restoration was infallibly prescribed The messianic ideal was a group conception into which political aspirations, religious imperialism and moral vindications merged." (1)

(1) A History of Messianic Speculation in Israel, p. ix.

Chapter I

PRELIMINARY SURVEY

Out of the Jewish nationalism, as we have seen, grew the maxim "that God gave many commands and ordinances to the people of Israel for the purpose of providing them with much reward." (1) However, as conditions in Israel grew worse everyone realized that this reward was not in the present and the hope grew stronger that a future day would see the glorification of Israel. As is natural in human conceptions, there was not complete unanimity of opinion as to the nature of the future kingdom, nor as to the method by which it would be effected.

This variance of belief regarding the method to be used resolved into two main categories, the theory which claimed that the divine kingdom would be achieved by the intervention of a representative of the Deity -- the Messiah; and the alternative theory which looked to direct divine action, with no Messiah. In the field of the nature of the kingdom to come there were also two main beliefs, in that while some looked more for a moral purification of the nation, resulting in a perfect race,

(1) The Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ, p. 128.

others concentrated on temporal matters -- the political superiority of Israel to be achieved through force of arms.

These later developments, however, need not concern us at present. "The older Messianic hope virtually moves within the boundary of the then present circumstances of the world, and is nothing else than the hope of a better future for the nation."(1) This better future was interpreted as a state in which the Jewish people would be morally purified through divine action and would live in internal peace under a righteous ruler of Davidic ancestry. Its foreign relations would be untroubled after the inevitable destruction or conversion of the Gentile nations, and this peace would be further enhanced by the abolition of all natural evil and suffering. This hope of better conditions in Israel was the nucleus of the prophetic Messianic teachings. It will be seen at once that little or nothing is said concerning an agent of Yahweh appointed by Him to carry out the miraculous changes in the moral and temporal conditions of mankind. The hope for the Kingdom of God on earth was born long before any theory of an intermediary came into

(1) Ibid., p. 129.

existence.

Since national pride is common to all nations, Jewry could not be expected to be alone in such a belief. Persia and Egypt both had traditions of another world, either in the past or future, traditions which may well have influenced Jewish beliefs when the races involved learned of each other's cultures. Persia in particular had vivid eschatological conceptions. The Persians looked to the time when the age-old struggle between the forces of good and evil would come to a crisis -- Persia would be attacked by her foes and saved only by the intervention of Hushedar, son of Zarathustra. The ensuing battle was expected to last a millenium, ending in victory for the forces of the good.

A second millenium followed this victory -- one of perfection and happiness under Hushedar Mah, another son of Zarathustra, but since the absence of evil removed all ambition, loss of faith was expected to ensue, at which time the Evil One would loose a dragon on the world which would kill a third of mankind, eat all plant life, and destroy all morality. The dragon's death would be followed by peace and finally the inauguration of the perfect kingdom with only one battle before the attainment of immortality for the righteous.

Egypt also had a definite belief in the perfect world, but the Egyptian tradition placed it in the past rather than in the future. Legend told of the existence of a perfect kingdom before the beginning of time, in the valley of the Nile, ruled over by Osiris.

There are obvious similarities between Jewish eschatology and that of the Persians particularly, and it is fairly evident that Jewish beliefs were influenced by the Gentile traditions when Israel came into cultural contact with Persia.

Chapter II

A HISTORY OF OLD TESTAMENT MESSIANISM

"'The Messiah' (with the article and not in apposition with another word) occurs for the first time in apocalyptic literature In the Old Testament the earliest use of the word is with YHWH (or with a pronominal suffix referring to YHWH) as a title of the ruling sovereign Meshiah YHWH (God's anointed one'...)"(1)

The use of the name "Messiah" is not found in the Old Testament. However, the general idea of a righteous king occurs often in the writings of the Old Testament prophets. The origin of the word is found in the practice of anointing the king, as seen in I Sam. 15:1 and elsewhere, nor can there be valid doubt that this ceremony of anointment was looked on as investing the king with magical power and a superhuman status in life. As the anointing of the high priest consecrated him and gave him immediate access to God, so the anointing of the king established him as the person chosen by God to rule Israel (I Sam. 10:1).

Naturally, the common people would hope for righteous kings, but Isaiah is the first prophet to

(1) The Jewish Encyclopaedia, Vol. VIII, p. 505.

express this hope for a future ideal king, as seen in Isa. 9:6-7, in which he prophesies the appearance of a just and peaceful ruler who will lead Israel under Yahweh's care.(1) It is worthy of notice that the prophet speaks of a peaceful and righteous era under this king, a conception to which the catastrophic visions of the Apocalyptic era, and indeed of popular belief in Isaiah's own time, are wholly foreign.

In Oesterley and Robinson's "Hebrew Religion, Its Origin and Development" (2) we find the viewpoint expressed that this belief in a future righteous ruler held by Isaiah developed out of his conception of the relations between Yahweh and Israel, relations of co-operation or interdependence based on Isaiah's belief in the highly moral nature of God. Growing out of this belief are also the prophecies that, whatever the sufferings Yahweh's people may endure, some remnant will return to enjoy the rule of the future righteous ruler (Isa. 7:3 -- the name of the prophet's son "Shear-yashub" -- a remnant shall return), which, though expressed with varying degrees of conviction, nevertheless occur fairly often in his

(1) Driver, after considerable discussion, concedes Isaianic authorship for this passage.

(2) pp. 241 f.



writings. This nucleus developed into the full Messianic doctrine which was to take such a predominant place in Jewish religious development.

It is apparent, however, from the writings of Isaiah's predecessors, that there already existed a popular faith in Israel's ultimate ascendancy to a position of importance in world affairs. Probably one of the earliest examples of this is found in the J document of the 9th century B.C., where we see this hope expressed in Yahweh's promise to Abraham of His favour to him and his descendents, (Gen. 12:1 f). Out of this belief there developed soon the idea of the "Day of Yahweh".

"The original conception was probably that of the day on which YHWH manifests Himself as the wielder of thunder and lightning, as the devastator who shatters the powers opposing Him; and this was in historical times transformed into the day when He would smite Israel's foes".
(1)

Such an interpretation met opposition first in the writings of Amos, seen most explicitly in Ch. 5:18-20, where the prophet declares that the longed-for Day of Yahweh will be one of terrible punishment and destruction

(1) Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. IV, p. 476.

not so much of Israel's enemies as of Israel herself. Hosea at first shares in this explanation, pointing out that just as Yahweh brought Israel out of Egypt, so He will destroy her (Hos. 13:9). Isaiah, however, picks up this teaching and carries it on to the forecast that this punishment will be in the nature of a purification by fire, out of which Israel will emerge restored on a basis of righteousness (Isa. 1:24-26).

Here, then, is a concrete development of the "Day of Yahweh" into the hope of the righteous kingdom, which, when connected with Isaiah's prophecy of the righteous king, produces the Messianic hope in its essence, the nucleus around which grew the ideas of the later prophets, and still later, the various religious leaders of Apocryphal and Christian times.

After Isaiah, little or nothing was written on Messianism, whether personal or impersonal, until near the close of the sixth century B.C. The only contribution Isaiah's successor, Micah, could be said to have made towards continuing the hope of a future righteous king would be his denunciation of contemporary rulers who corrupted their high offices for personal gain (Hos. 3:9f). Such a passage as 5:1-3 speaks of an apparently divinely-authorized ruler, and hence might be called messianic, but

there is good internal evidence for considering these verses post-exilic, probably of the time when Zerubbabel was being looked to as the Messiah. (1)

After Micah Judah returned to heathenism under Manasseh, who opened the doors for the Assyrian gods, particularly to Ishtar, the planet Venus, queen of heaven. The pagan religion spread alarmingly throughout the land, helped by the memories of the old men and women of Judah of a past religion.

"All the old Semitic stock of gods, whose altars and sacred poles Hezekiah had scrapped, now trooped back for a final fling before the great prophets and the scourge of the exile should drive them out forever."(2)

Such a state continued without protest until about 625 B.C. when Zephaniah revived the warnings of Amos a century earlier concerning the Day of Yahweh as a time of punishment for Judah's sins, based probably on fear that the Sythians, then raiding adjacent territory, would attack Jerusalem (Zeph. 1:7, 14f). As is the case with Micah, Zephaniah's message is negative -- there is no hope of a future more righteous kingdom whatsoever which can be conceded as original.

(1) International Critical Commentary, p. 102

(2) A History of the Hebrew Commonwealth, p. 221

This long period of dormancy in Messianic teachings is finally broken by the prophet Jeremiah, writing at approximately 625-580 B.C. As with Zephaniah, it is possible that Jeremiah was forced to overcome his dislike of publicity and openly denounce Judah's sins, by fear of a Scythian invasion (Jer. 1:13f). He has, however, comparatively little to say on this matter, due largely to the fact that, being a practical man living in a time of turmoil -- the Babylonian threat and invasions -- he was chiefly occupied with the task of averting the complete destruction of the nation. The clearest example of his hope for a future righteous king of the nation is given very concisely in Ch. 23:3-6, where he speaks of a divinely appointed ruler of Davidic lineage who will enforce law and justice, resulting in security for Judah and Israel after the people have been gathered together as a restored nation. In such passages as this, and in his buying of the land in Anathoth (Jer. 32:7-9) he shows his confident expectation of a brighter future, in spite of the precarious condition of Judah under the imminency of Babylonian invasion. The spiritual aspect of this future state is seen by Jeremiah in the "New Covenant" which Yahweh will make with Judah and Israel after the restoration, a covenant based on the peoples' complete understanding and

hence obedience to God's will (Jer. 31:31-34).

Throughout this period, from the eighth to the early part of the sixth centuries, the emphasis in prophetic, social, political and religious teachings was in the main on the inevitability of divine intervention. The prophets denounced the sinful nation and warned of impending doom.

The forecasted doom arrived speedily in the shape of the Babylonian invasion and the exile of the Jews, completed in 586 B.C. As a result of this catastrophe the people realized that these years did not constitute the Day of Yahweh -- the nation had been conquered and enslaved, but their hope of ultimate triumph, instead of dying, grew stronger. Out of the time of exile came one of the most beautiful of the psalms -- 42, 43, voicing the discouragement of the people but praying for intervention of Yahweh to rescue them and lead them back to Jerusalem and the religious services of the Temple.

It is natural that such an experience as the exile should have strong effects on the Jews. Any race, on being transplanted to a vastly more elaborate culture, will change gradually or speedily, becoming continually more influenced by its environment. The most prolific writer of the early exilic years, Ezekiel, shows this effect well.

Ezekiel, the priest, was taken to Babylon with the first deportation in 597 (3:15) and from there followed the course of events leading to the destruction of Jerusalem in 586. Never did he voice the least hope that Jerusalem would resist the siege -- it was a hopeless resistance to a powerful enemy. With the capture of Jerusalem the tone of his teachings changes from futility to hope for a future restoration. His warnings of the fall of Jerusalem were proven true and he became respected, and popular because of his prophecies of a happier future.

Ezekiel uses his usual visionary methods to express his interpretation of the hope for restoration of Israel and Judah. Moreover, as is characteristic with lessons derived from ecstatic experiences, the motives he sees behind Yahweh's promises are not highly moral. Recurring continually throughout the last section, the new covenant between Yahweh and His people is motivated by vanity on Yahweh's part -- the race will be restored and made dominant in world affairs in order to teach the nations that Yahweh is supreme. His conception of this new kingdom of true followers of Yahweh, eternal and prosperous, under the sovereignty of "my servant David" (Moffatt) is seen best in 37:21-28. The reference to David could mean either a descendant of David, or David himself returned to earthly life.(1)

(1) International Critical Commentary, p. 402

One cannot decide between these two alternatives, but either of them demonstrates Ezekiel's admiration of the national hero and of his belief that the Messianic king will be Davidic. In this teaching Ezekiel repopularizes the hope for a restoration of the Davidic dynasty. The doctrine of the Messianic king is beginning to assume a definite shape.

Little need be said of Ezekiel's contemporary, Obadiah. He returns to the old interpretation of the Day of Yahweh, particularly with reference to the traitorous Edomites -- a time to come when they will be punished by Yahweh, along with all the nations. But since the Jews have already suffered, they will be restored, what is left of them, to dwell again in Zion in complete protection under Yahweh (vv. 16-18). No mention is made of a divine or human viceroy -- Yahweh's direct intervention will be the cause, and He will be the ruler of the nation.

Very soon after Obadiah had announced his message, international strife on a comparatively large scale appeared. Persia, becoming steadily more powerful, conquered the rather short-lived Babylonian Empire in 538, under the leadership of Cyrus. In the following year, he gave his permission to the Jews to return to their native land. A few years before this liberation there arose a prophet, called now for lack of knowledge of his real name,

II Isaiah, whose writings are now embodied in Chs. 40-55 of our book of Isaiah, according to the generally accepted theory today.

The interpretation of II Isaiah has been a matter of dispute, centering mainly around the question of who the "Servant" so often referred to represents. At present let it suffice to accept the viewpoint held by the majority of critical scholars of the present -- that the Servant is not some person but the nation as a whole. Not until centuries later did the former interpretation appear, and it can well be dealt with in its proper chronological position.

The writer of II Isaiah was deeply religious, seeing Yahweh as supreme controller of all nations, the power behind the conquests of Cyrus (Isa. 48:14). He has a vivid picture of the restoration of Israel, the first stage of which must be the moral purification of the people (Isa. 44:2) through Yahweh's forgiveness. On this moral basis the redemption for the world is built, for after the purification, Israel will be worthy of divine favour. This favour, however, will be shown, says the prophet, in an unexpected way. There is nothing of the Day of Yahweh theory, nor of any day of destruction to Israel's enemies, an idea which is incompatible with the prophet's monotheism, since

Yahweh is God and protector of all nations. Instead of the former crude prophecies of ruin, the faith here expressed is that the nations of the world will see how Yahweh restores Israel after her punishments, which were preparatory to her future service, and will realize that Yahweh is the one and only true God. After this realization the nations will come to the religion of Yahweh, deserting their former idols, the world will be unified under the one God, and international goodwill will follow (Vide e.g., Isa. 45). In this apocalyptic hope there is no personal Messiah, but an international unity of worshippers of Yahweh, accomplished through the activities of God in the human scene. It is notable that here in II Isaiah the idea of Yahweh as God of all nations is carried to its completion -- that in the kingdom to come, the old disputes between Jew and Gentile will be removed and all will be one.

Like most prophets, the writer of II Isaiah indulges in considerable hyperbole. He speaks confidently and glowingly of the coming return of the Jews to Palestine over a straight and level road across desert, through valleys and hills to their goal. Their home coming will be in happiness and triumph, led by their God to the sacred hills of Zion, (Isa. 40:1f). It is a picture of absolute faith in a bright future, not only for Israel, though she will be enriched

first, but later for the whole world, brought to Yahweh by the admirable example of His servant, Israel.

Unfortunately, the actual return was the very opposite of the prophet's expectations. Over a long and weary road the exiles travelled, back to a despoiled and ruined Jerusalem, to be greeted by cold unfriendliness on the part of those who had taken over the city and were loathe to give up the land they had appropriated. Dissention arose among the returned exiles and the natives and all the glorious hopes for the new Jerusalem seemed doomed.(1)

The returning Jews looked forward, as we have seen, to an age of national prosperity, and found a ruined city. Because of this, the first requisite to the new age, the rebuilding of the temple, faded into insignificance beside the need of such material things as homes for the people. This condition lasted for five or six years after the first return in 526 B.C. until it faced its first challenge under Haggai and Zechariah, both of whom protested vehemently that the Jews could expect no favor from Yahweh as long as He had no Temple, and promised in His name that when the Temple was rebuilt, the people would receive His blessing in the form

(1) A History of the Hebrew Commonwealth, p. 272-3.

of material prosperity (Haggai 1:2-5). Zachariah even goes so far as to tell them who will rule them under Yahweh, telling them to place the crown upon Zerubbabel (Zech.6:11).

Under this inspiration, and with the approval of Darius, the people quickly started the work, and the Temple was finished in 516.

Even now, however, the promised age did not arrive, and Zerubbabel, far from becoming their king, seems to have disappeared completely from the scene. Various attempts were made to enthrone their own king, but all were defeated, and the final result was the placing of a Persian governor at the head of the Jewish colony.

With that action the hopes of the people for a true Jewish nation seemed doomed, and this situation had an unfortunate effect on the people. The actual effects are seen in the writings under the name "Malachi", where we read of very poor support of the Temple, of sacrifices of the poorest animals, but worse than that, of intermarriage between Jews and the surrounding Gentiles, intermarriages accomplished sometimes by the divorcing of Jewish wives in favor of Gentile women, (Mal. 1:12-13; 2:14).

It is possible that the attempt to rebuild the wall

described in Ezra 4 followed soon after the message of "Malachi" (1); but one would be unwise to put too much trust in the history contained in Ezra. If, however, this conjecture is true, the attempt to follow the teachings of the preceding prophet failed, evidently because of the intrigue of the surrounding peoples who were loath to see Jerusalem rebuilt and strengthened. In order to prevent this they sent word to Artaxerxes, now king of Persia, telling of the attempt to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and pointing out all the underirable consequences of the plan which could possibly happen. Artaxerxes, in reply, gave orders for the cessation of work on the city wall, and thus defeated another attempt to make a city nation of Jerusalem.

However, the plan was finally brought to a successful conclusion when Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem in 445, with permission to build the city wall. By dint of marvellous organization, in spite of all sorts of attempts to discredit the plan itself, he completed the wall and the perpetuation of the Jewish religion and , indeed, of the Jewish race, was made possible. Again there seemed reason to hope for the new age under divine rule.

(1) Israel's Messianic Hope, p. 197.

There might now have been a tremendous revival of Messianism had it not been for the fact that during the days of depression the Priestly class had siezed the power. From the time of the disappearance of Zerubbabel the power of the priests had been growing stronger, until the high priest himself was a virtual king. During this time the P document of the Pentateuch was published, and it is probably some priest who was responsible for attributing some of the reforms of Nehemiah to the far less objectionable Ezra, who may never have even lived, apart from tradition.

As it was, the silence was broken rather violently by the brief message of Joel somewhere around 430 B.C., telling of the coming Day of Yahweh, when Judah would be prospered and all other nations would be summoned together for a final judgment. It is an unfortunate return to the old ideas of national prosperity and foreign destruction, totally uninfluenced by the almost contemporary international teaching of the book of Jonah. Joel's was a purely national hope for a better world, to be brought about by Yahweh, with no Messianic mediary.

A century later the hopes of the Jewish people received a temporary uplift by the Macedonian conquest of Persia, carried on by Alexander the Great. This feeling is

reflected in Isaiah 24-27, which tells of the promised Day of Yahweh, along traditional lines of extreme nationalism -- the gleanings of the faithful from among the Gentile nations before the great destruction, leaving the Jews safe and prosperous in Jerusalem.

At this time also Zechariah 9-11, 12-14 was written, telling of how the Jews will be used by Yahweh in His plan for the destruction of the surrounding nations. Both writings reflect a strong hope living in spite of desperate present conditions which are inevitable in the presence of war close at hand.

After this there followed an era which, in the field of literature, featured homiletic writings, under the ever-spreading influence of Greek culture, unbroken until 167 B.C. when the Jews' simmering hatred of the Greeks finally burst into open revolt under the Maccabees.

Chapter III

PRE-CHRISTIAN APOCALYPTICISM OF APOCRYPHAL LITERATURE

It has been seen how the apocalyptic hopes of the Jewish people had taken on an impersonal aspect, featuring no divine agent of any sort. The book of Daniel, the last canonical writing of this period, tells of the establishment of the divine Kingdom as a result of the work of God and His angels. There is no mention of any ruler of the Davidic lineage, nor of any special human person used by God to fulfill His purposes. The symbolism of this book uses a beast to represent the irreligious foreign nations, and a man to represent the saintly, but there is nothing to justify taking this man as a person in his own right. Daniel's hope is the universal dominion of the saints. (1)

From the time of the Maccabaeen uprising until the appearance of Christian canonical writings, we must look to the apocryphal literature for any signs of change in messianic conceptions on the part of the Jewish people. In this field, we do, however, find considerable signs.

"Never was the intensity of Israel's forward look greater than in the century and a half preceding the birth of

(1) The Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ, Div. & Vol. II.

Jesus. In no period are the details of the future pictured more variously." (1)

With the appearance of the Maccabaeen leaders, the idea of a personal agent of Yahweh grew in strength, but the detailed following of this development is made rather difficult by the impossibility of dating these writings with absolute certainty. With what knowledge we have as to dates of these writings, we can see, however, that this growth of belief in the coming of a personal Messiah was not uninterrupted, but that writers prophesied both personal and impersonal forms of apocalypticism. This is well represented in the book of Enoch, more properly called a compilation of several books. Written during the first and second centuries before Christ, these books speak of the establishment of the perfect Kingdom through direct divine intervention, to be followed by the rule of Yahweh, or of the appearance, after the attainment of the new world, of a Messiah, who may be either pre-existent or newly born. (2) There was no unanimity of opinion in this much-discussed matter, every writer having his own beliefs

(1) Israel's Messianic Hope, p. 247.

(2) The Millennial Hope, Ch. 2.

and showing no concern whatsoever for the differences between his and other writers' ideas. The political and international turmoil of the age was reflected very strongly in the apocalyptic literature.

As might be expected, the various prophets of the new age claimed varying followings. The intellectual class took the whole idea much more soberly than did the common people. Those with a knowledge of contemporary world history could see quite clearly how it happened that the Jewish people were in subjection, but those less well informed saw only the nation which they firmly believed was God's favorite did not prosper, and therefore trusted that divine favor would ultimately show itself in a material way.

This feature came strongly to light during and after the Maccabaeen revolts when the Jewish nation finally achieved full independence in 143-2 B.C. At the first hope of such a change in their state, the common people rallied around Mattathias, and later, his son Judas and fought with a religious zeal that gave them added strength. When Simon was declared high priest forever the Pharisees showed their attitude by casting doubts on his right to that position. As a result, at the time when the nation should have been strengthening their forces by uniting, the priestly class

joined hands with the more politically minded Sadducees against the Pharisees. Thus, while the populace were expecting the steady growth of a divinely guided kingdom, their leaders were leading to its downfall.

The downfall finally came when, in 63 B.C., Pompey led his Roman army into Jerusalem, having taken advantage of the growing weakness of the Syrian empire to conquer its colonies for Rome. Jerusalem again became a subject state, governed by Hyrcanus II as high priest, acting under authority and supervision of the Roman governor of Syria. The desperate condition of the Jewish erstwhile nation came to a climax in 37 B.C. when Herod, Idumaeen son of Antipater, became governor of Jerusalem. This became an age dotted with sporadic and short-lived revolts, when any man with a gift for leadership could become acclaimed as the promised Messiah and lead an ill-fated and badly equipped army against the Romans. Roman domination heightened faith in a future better world, and this, coupled with a growing belief in a spiritual rather than anthropomorphic Yahweh, made the idea of a Messiah to appear and lead the people to freedom necessarily strong. (1) The Jewish colony of the Roman Empire was a hotbed of seething hatred, helped

(1) The Jewish World in the Time of Jesus, Bk. II, Ch. IV.

considerably by the fact that they were being governed by a foreigner, and the whole populace continually expected the Messiah to appear. For the people this faith was their only hope; for their rulers it was their chief trouble.

Chapter IV

A CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL STUDY OF ALLEGEDLY MESSIANIC PASSAGES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Throughout the preceding chapters certain interpretations have been assumed concerning translation and chronology in regard to passages in the Old Testament which are considered by many as being Messianic in tone. In some cases the treatment of these passages has differed, implicitly or otherwise, with that which would be given them by a follower of what might be termed the "orthodox school." For that reason it would be well to study sections whose Messianic character is open to question in order to justify the interpretations which have been used heretofore. Due to frequent difficulty in stating the date of writing with any finality, it will be best to deal with these sections in the order in which they appear in our Bible rather than in any attempted chronological order, since the latter course would result in something akin to chaos.

Genesis 3:15, giving the divine curse on the snake in the Garden of Eden, has been considered as prophesying a Messiah. Clarke's Bible Commentary, q.v., says that there is no justification for taking this passage literally, and

according to this source Satan is referred to, since he inspired the serpent. "He shall strike" refers to Christ, the son of woman only ("her seed"), and, as Clarke proceeds, the bruising of the serpent's head refers to the destruction of Satan's power through the atoning death of Christ. The bruising of "his heel" is interpreted into a prophecy that the salvation of man could be brought about only by the death of Christ.

However, there seems to be no reason for refusing to accept a literal treatment of this verse since it fits the context perfectly. Furthermore, to say that a virgin birth is implied in the phrase "her seed" is just as illogical as to say that our expression "the woman's son" outrules the possibility of the child in question having a human father. There is no justification possible for subjecting this verse to such a contorted exegesis.

In Genesis 12:7 is found the promise of God to Abraham and his seed. At first glance one would almost certainly consider that here "his seed" refers to Abraham's descendents. However, Paul read into it a reference to Christ (Gal. 3:16) since the word used, " $\tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron\iota$ (^s) " is singular and therefore must refer to one person. One wonders at such an interpretation especially since, in v. 29 of the

same chapter, Paul himself uses the singular "seed", "σπέρμα", to refer to Christians of unlimited number. The Hebrew language uses the singular form in a collective sense whenever the idea of offspring is expressed. Because of this normal usage, this passage is justly considered as being non-Messianic.

In Deuteronomy 18:15 a definite and obvious prophecy of the coming of Christ is seen by some. However, such an idea is completely disproven when one remembers that in this verse and in verse 18 it is definitely stated that the expected prophet will be like the writer, and since the writer of this book never makes Messianic claims, he could not have been looking forward to anything more than a coming prophet of no spectacular nature.

The Book of Psalms contains the next disputable passages, a few psalms having been termed Messianic by some scholars. The first of these is the second Psalm, into which has been read a picture of the kingdom of Christ and an exhortation to accept it. This interpretation is shown to be a mistake by the fact that the king referred to is evidently contemporaneous to the writer (v. 6). The reference in v. 2 to the "anointed one" offers no obstacle to such an interpretation since the kings of Judah were

anointed as earthly agents of God, holding their sovereignty under Him. Thus Saul is anointed by Samuel (I Sam. 10:1), and although the verb "משח" is different from that in the psalm, "שח", it is a synonym.

Psalm 45 has been summarized as depicting the majesty and grace of Christ's kingdom, although the reasons for that interpretation seem rather obscure, since the psalm lends itself readily to something more along the line of a wedding celebration, possibly written at the time of Ahab's marriage to Jezebel, which would explain verse 10. There appears to be no clear justification for considering this an allegory of any sort.

Psalm 47 is also looked on as prophetic of Christ's kingdom by some. However, the psalm's martial tone is totally lacking in harmony with the character of Christ and the kingdom of which he himself spoke. For that reason alone this psalm could well be dismissed from the list of Messianic passages in the Old Testament.

In Psalm 72 is seen one which might be taken as Messianic if only the content were considered without any effort being made to date it or determine the identity of the king to whom it refers. However, Oesterley and Robinson consider it a song written for a king ascending

the throne at that time.(1) Possibly it was written in 620 B.C., when Josiah was enthroned; at any rate it shows too high a moral insight to justify its Davidic inscription. There is no reason to consider that this psalm was written in a prophetic vein apart from the conventional forecasts of a glorious reign.

Brief mention may be made of Psalm 93, into which has been read a prophecy of Christ's kingdom. This is a theocratic psalm and mentions no divine agent of any sort, therefore it obviously cannot be considered Messianic.

The next book to be investigated, The Song of Songs, needs only a single reading to show that it is far too carnal (not in any way disagreeable to the writer's contemporaries) to be considered prophetic of anything in the field of moral achievement. Several theories about this book have been promulgated, of which the "dramatic wedding lyric" seems the most suitable. There is no reference, whether explicit or implicit, to either God or a Messiah, and whatever the correct interpretation is, it calls for a seriously strained exegesis to consider that this very humanly passionate poem could possibly disguise a prophecy

)1/ Hebrew Religion, Its Origin and Development, p. 376.

of the coming of Christ.

The book of Isaiah, now to be considered, must be divided roughly into three sections, namely Chapters 1-39, 40-55, 56-66. It should be remembered, however, that all sections falling into the first group, for instance, need not necessarily be treated as the work of Isaiah, although this group is mostly authentic. Similarly, not all of Chs. 40-55 is written by Deutero-Isaiah, nor is there any unity of authorship throughout Chs. 56-66.

In the second chapter of Isaiah the prophet foresees a better world to come. Because of the Authorized Version translation of the phrase "בְּאַחֲרֵי הַיָּמִים" as "in the last days" in v. 2 this is often taken as a prophecy of Christ's kingdom. However, the above translation is somewhat exaggerated since "אַחֲרֵי" means "after" when used in a temporal sense, and therefore this phrase should be translated, as Moffatt puts it, "in after days". When this is done it is obvious that Isaiah was not referring to any apocalyptic kingdom to come at the end of this present world, but was instead expressing his conviction that the world was going to turn soon to the one true God with universal and eternal peace resulting. Moreover, there is no reference to any divine intervention, either directly from God or through

His agent, so this passage may be justifiably treated as non-Messianic.

Isaiah 7:14 has been almost universally construed as a prophecy of the birth of Christ, due to a mistranslation which makes the passage correspond in detail to the tradition of the virgin birth of Christ. The fault lies in the Hebrew word "נַעֲמָ" which is translated as "παρθενος" in the Septuagint, as "veavis" in the later Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotian manuscripts, and as "virgin" in the Authorized Version. Unfortunately for the traditional view the Hebrew word under dispute does not mean "virgin", and the "παρθενος" of the Septuagint must be considered a mistranslation. "נַעֲמָ" means simply a young woman of marriageable age, whether actually married or not, or still possessing her virginity or not.

H. T. Fowler explains the true context very clearly, showing its reference to the near future:

"The king (Ahaz) is determined to carry out his own plan, and so Isaiah offers him a sign from Jehovah, such as he himself shall choose. With feigned reverence, Ahaz declines to put God to the test, and the prophet, in Jehovah's name, determines the sign to be given. As soon as a young woman bear a child and that child can grow to the earliest choise of good and evil, nay sooner, the land whose two kings thou abhorrest shall be forsaken. The time element is surely a main feature of the prediction, but Isaiah's words are not merely a general poetic statement of time: he refers to some particular child to be born to

whom the symbolic name God-with-us, Immanuel, is to be given." (1)

In Isaiah 9:6f is another passage usually connected with the coming of Jesus. This is rather hard to understand since the characteristics of the model king prophesied have nothing in common with those of Jesus. The qualities of the foreseen ruler are those of a just but stern king, with no mention of the love taught so much by Christ. Fowler contends that the prophet here has been carried away by the name "God-with-us" and is visualizing the coming kingdom as an established fact, so certain is he that the future will be as he has prophesied.(2) Whether this treatment is justified or not, it seems obvious that to interpret this passage as a true prophecy of Christ's kingdom is to do an injustice to the person of Jesus, since the moral standards are definitely on a lower scale than are those of Jesus.

With Ch. 11:1ff appear certain difficulties in deciding authenticity of authorship. Fowler considers this "... one of the wonderful passages of this book ..." and expresses doubt that Isaiah wrote it.(3) Oesterley and Robinson, however, say it is "probably the utterance of an

(1) A History of the Literature of Ancient Israel,
pp. 150-151.

(2) *ibid.* p. 151.

(3) *ibid.* p. 160.

exilic prophet...". (1) The nature of the kingdom does rather favor an exilic dating, but be that as it may, whatever its authorship, the passage is definitely Messianic and prophesies a righteous kingdom under a Davidic king in which even Nature will join in the universal harmony.

The next section to consider is Ch. 22:20f, which, although not alleged to be a reference to the kingdom of Christ, has been construed as a prefiguration of that kingdom. This judgment is definitely weak, since only a purely temporal kingdom under Eliakim is prophesied, set up and later broken down by Yahweh's direct action. There is nothing to justify any connection between this and apocalyptic beliefs.

Ch. 28:16 is the last passage of this first section of the book of Isaiah which has been included in Messianic prophecies. There is actually nothing here to justify any personal interpretation. Yahweh is going to lay a foundation stone in Zion, but the next verse would indicate that the stone represents not a Messiah but the qualities of justice and equity. The prophecy would seem to be a protest against the nation's international policy in

(1) Hebrew Religion, Its Origin and Development, p. 241, (footnote 1).

Isaiah's time, under the belief that it was based on intrigue and dishonesty instead of righteousness and honesty. Only a strained treatment could make a Messianic prophecy plausible here: it is a statesman-prophet's protest against a short-sighted and unfaithful government.

Any study of Chs. 40-55 of Isaiah involves the problem of the identity of the "Servant" so often featured by the writer. On that question hinges our decision in regard to the Messianic or non-Messianic nature of this section. Up until fairly recent times it was unquestioningly accepted that the "Servant" was a definite person, commonly believed to be Jesus. Of late years, however, considerable doubt has been cast on that assumption, arguments having been advanced favoring the idea that the "Servant" is a personification of the Jewish nation, and the dispute is still far from being settled.

H. T. Fowler holds no brief for either position in his treatment of these chapters, (1) but such a compromise is no solution. Oesterley and Robinson argue strongly for a personal interpretation, saying that "only a forced and unnatural exegesis" can support a national meaning. (2)

(1) A History of the Literature of Ancient Israel, p. 273.

(2) Hebrew Religion, Its Origin and Development, p. 304.

Their claim is that it is impossible to explain such passages as Chs. 49:1, 5, 6; 53:4-6 if the "Servant" is considered a personification of Israel. Guignebert mentions that Isaiah 53, for example, is generally accepted as national, but cites Hugo Gressman's argument that the "Servant" suffers with his people, and since history shows no such servant, the passage must, therefore, be Messianic.¹ Whether such a stand is tenable or not can best be decided in the light of direct translation from the Hebrew.

The first "Servant" passage in II Isaiah reveals clearly and indisputably the identity of the "Servant". Ch. 41:8 introduces this theme with the words " וְאֵלֶּיךָ יָשׁוּב וְיִשְׁלַח בְּיָדְךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיִשְׁלַח בְּיָדְךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיִשְׁלַח בְּיָדְךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל

וְיִשְׁלַח בְּיָדְךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל -- But thou, Israel, my servant....". There is nothing to contradict this interpretation in later verses, nor can "Israel" be treated as a gloss since the parallelism of the next lines substantiates the national identity of the "Servant" beyond any valid dispute:

"..... Jacob whom I have chosen, race of Abraham my friend ... and said to thee, Thou are my servant."

In Ch. 42 the author records the task Yahweh has assigned to the "Servant" -- the redemption of the nations of the world. Moffatt has mistranslated v. 6(b) in a way inconsistent with his treatment of the "Servant" as Israel,

(1) The Jewish World in the Time of Jesus (Bk.II) p. 146.

when he says, "... I have formed you for the rescuing of my people ...". It is obviously impossible for Israel to rescue Israel. However, this line should read, "... the people..." since there is no pronominal suffix attached to the noun "נַי" in the Hebrew text.

Again in 44:21 we are definitely told that Israel is Yahweh's servant, and 45:4 also speaks of the co-identity of Israel and the "Servant".

Against such evidence Oesterley and Robinson's contention that the "Israel" in 49:3 is a gloss(1) is rather pointless. Not only have they the backing of only one Manuscript (2), but they leave untouched many similarly explicit references to Israel as the "Servant". It would seem almost certain that the national interpretation is the correct one, in spite of such objections as have been mentioned. Undoubtedly there is a strong personal tenor in the writings of this prophet, but that is no argument for a personal meaning, since the writers of Israel commonly associated themselves so closely with the troubles of the nation as a whole that their national writings very often seemed more individual than social. Oesterley and Robinson

(1) Hebrew Religion, Its Origin and Development, p. 304.

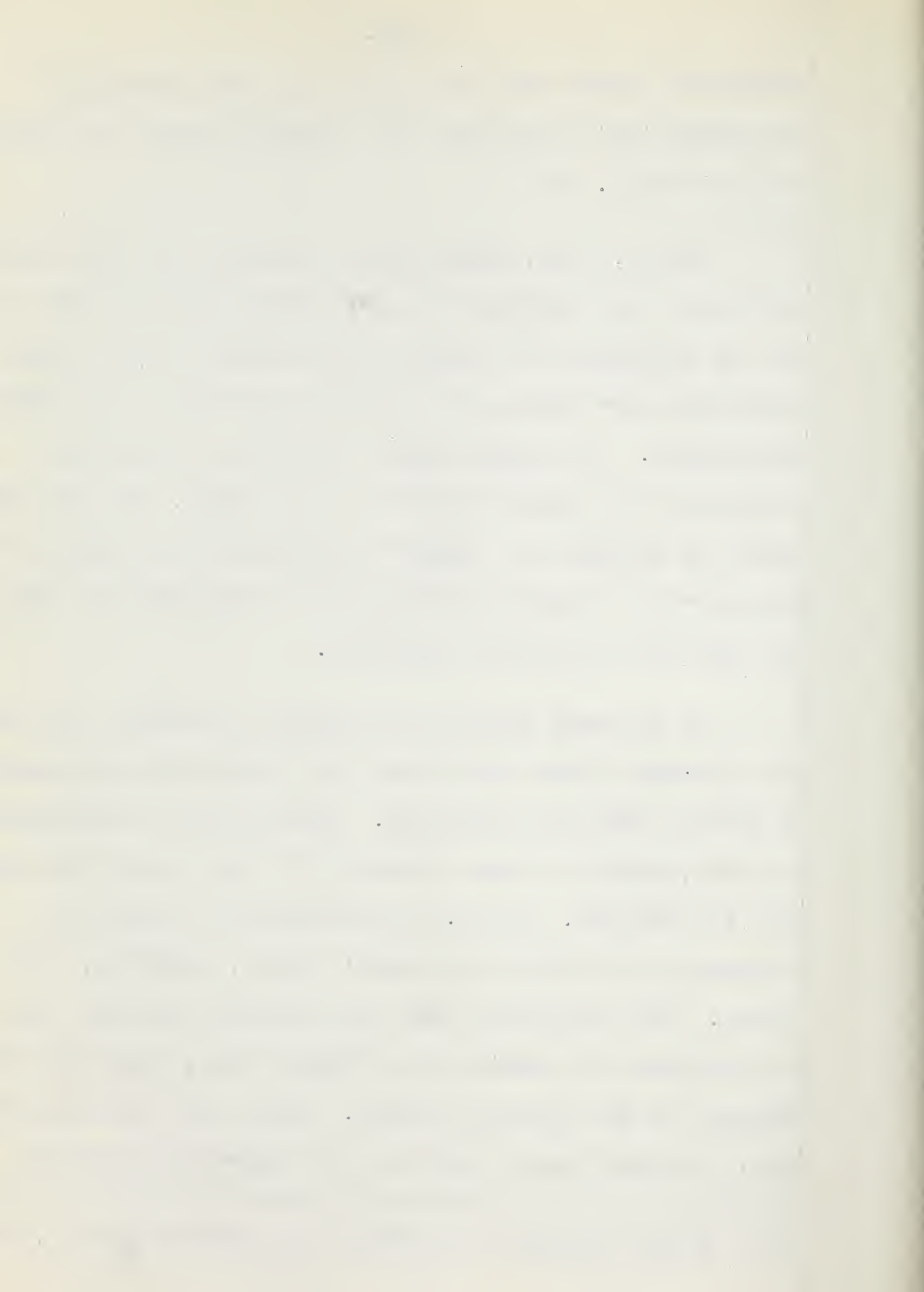
(2) Biblia Hebraica, v. Isa. 49:3.

themselves admit this in saying that many seemingly individualistic represent the community under the guise of an individual. (1)

Having, then, demonstrated clearly that the Jewish nation is the "Servant" we may safely conclude that none of the writings of II Isaiah is Messianic in the sense of predicting the coming of a personal Messiah in any manner whatsoever. II Isaiah looked forward to a glorious, righteous and peaceful world of the future, but this world would be attained by Israel's consecration of herself to the service of Yahweh in the task of bringing the nations of the world to the one true God.

In the next book to be studied, Jeremiah, are found a few passages often associated with Messianism, inasmuch as a Davidic king is prophesied. Jeremiah was a statesman-prophet, having a deep affection for his country and concern for its welfare. In Ch. 22 he speaks for Yahweh in condemning the wrongs of Judah's ruler, Zedekiah, and his court. This continues into the following chapter, and here he forecasts the coming of a Davidic king, appointed by Yahweh, to the throne of Judah. Under this king the nation will be ruled justly and well, to compensate for its

(1) Hebrew Religion, Its Origin and Development, p. 339.

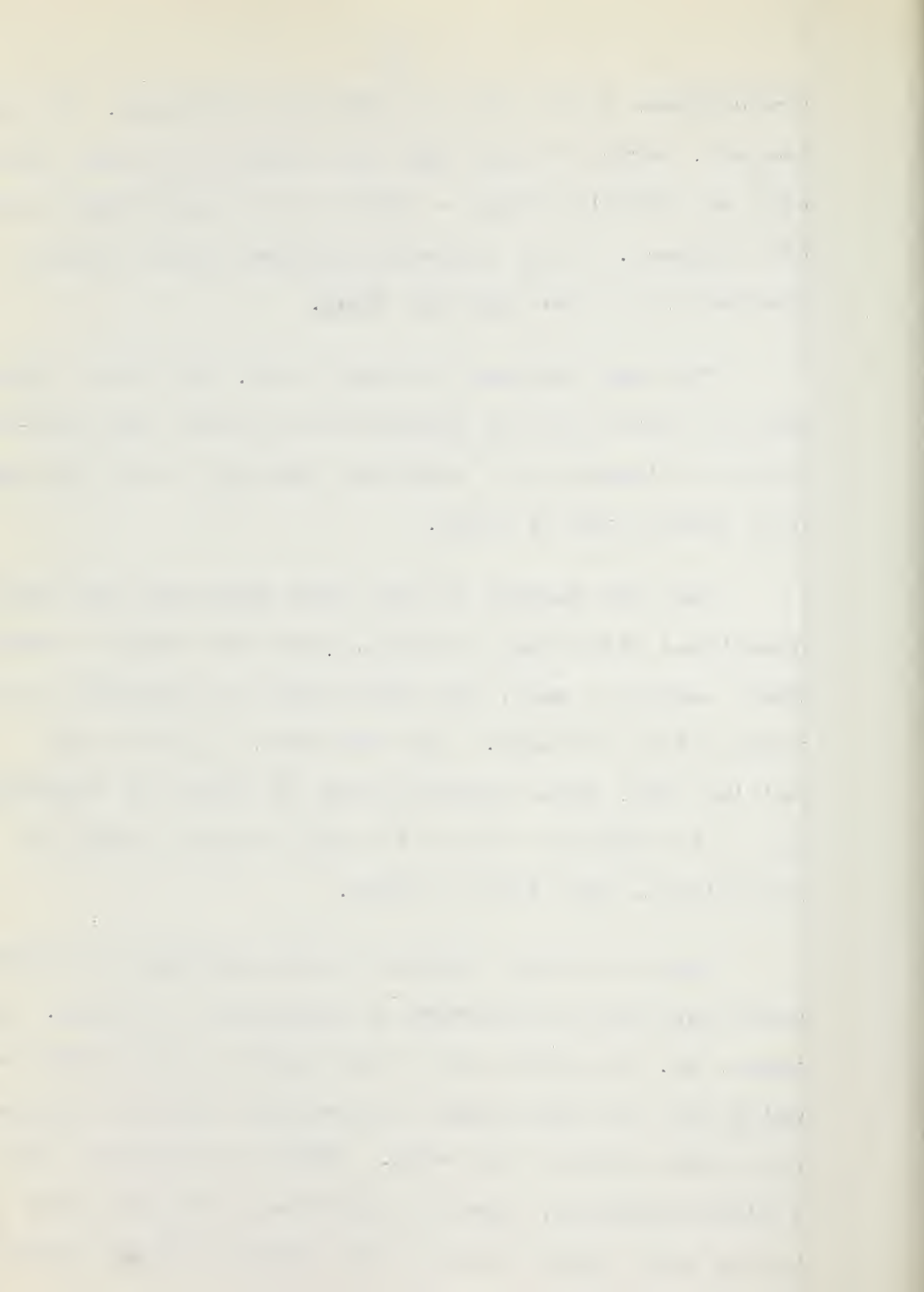


wretchedness at the time of Jeremiah's writings. It is, however, worthy of note that the prophet considers this king will be strictly mortal -- there is no supernatural tone in the prophecy. It is a purely political state, albeit governed by a pious and just king.

The same prophecy is found in Ch. 33: 15-16, almost word for word with the previous one, which, like 23:5-6, cannot be treated as a conscious prophecy of the appearance of a leader such as Jesus.

The only passage of this book which has been definitely associated with Jesus is 31:22, where the words "A woman shall compass a man", have been taken as referring to the virgin birth of Jesus. The verb here, "לָבַט" in the Po'l'el form, means anything from "go about" to "defend" and it is therefore absurd to look on such a verse as referring to the birth of Jesus.

There are three chapters in the writings of Ezekiel which have been interpreted as prophecies of Christ. Of these, Ch. 36 speaks only of the coming of the better world which will be established by Yahweh for reasons discussed in an earlier part of this work. There is nothing to suggest a divine mediator, human or otherwise, bringing about or ruling this future world so this chapter cannot logically be



treated as a prophecy of Christ's coming.

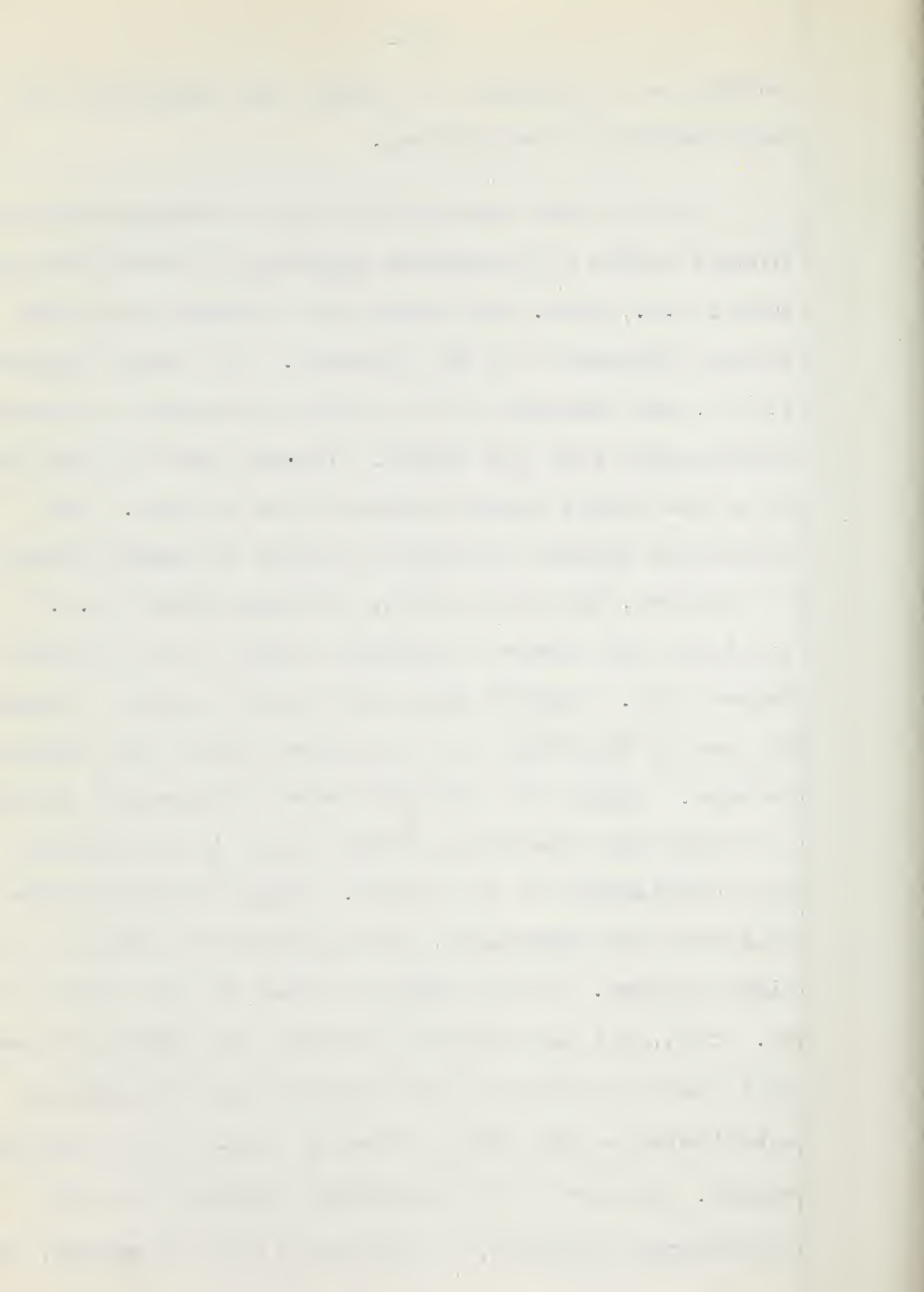
The other "Messianic" passages are in Chs. 34:23-24; 37:24 where we are told that David will return in person to assume the throne of the new world. Here, then, any connection with Jesus is outruled since, although Christ's ancestry was traditionally traced back to David, no one ever went to the extreme of claiming that Jesus was a re-incarnation of David. Ezekiel indisputably believed that David would return at Yahweh's will and no one else. Nor is there any room for doubt in the translation since the Hebrew, "דָּוִד עַבְדִּי" can mean only "my servant David" and none other.

Nowhere, then, in the book of Ezekiel, can there be found any prophecy referring to Jesus.

Micah 5:1-3 is considered by the editors of the Authorized Version as prophetic of the birth of Christ. Apart from the question of the authenticity of this section, which has already been discussed, there is little similarity between the king whose birth is here prophesied and the actual person and life of Christ. The person referred to in the book of Micah was to rule Israel, but Jesus never tried, nor even wanted, to follow that line of action. There is, therefore, no reason for interpreting this

section as a reference to a person who repudiated the primary feature of the prophecy.

In the sixth century writings of Zechariah appear another series of prophecies regarding a future king of Judah, e.g., Zech. 3:8 speaks of a divinely appointed person referred to as the "Branch". In a later chapter, 6:10 f, the identity of this king is revealed as someone contemporary with the author, although there is some doubt as to the actual person Zechariah had in mind. The Authorized Version follows the Hebrew in naming Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest, although Kittel (q.v.) considers the phrase in question added to the original Hebrew text. Moffatt emends the verse to read, "Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel" for deductive rather than textual reasons. Haggai and Zechariah were contemporary prophets and urged the rebuilding of the Temple in preparation for the purification of the nation. Haggai prophesies the exaltation of Zerubbabel, then governor of Judah, to a higher honour. Kittel finds no fault in this verse (v. Ch. 2:23), yet has reason to dispute the reading in Zech. 6:11 where a member of the priestly class is suddenly substituted as the future ruler of Judah for no apparent reason. In view of the similarity between these two contemporary prophets, in teaching if not in method, one is



strongly tempted to agree with Moffatt's conclusion that the original reading here was "Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel" rather than "Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest" and that the change was made by someone in sympathy with the aspirations of the priestly class to temporal power later in Jewish history.

Be that as it may, there is no basis whatsoever for considering the "Branch" as a term for Christ, for the "Branch" is someone living in Zechariah's time.

The next section of this book, Chs. 9-14, is not authentic with the first section, having been written much later, under different international conditions, probably sometime in the middle of the second century B.C. Whoever is referred to in Ch. 9:9 it could hardly be Jesus for the writer shows no interest at all in the sort of kingdom Jesus wanted, as is seen in the latter part of Ch. 14 where he speaks of a new Judah which will be ritualistically pure. This writer's idea of the righteous nation was one whose people piously observed the Mosaic Law to an almost fanatical extent (Ch. 14:20-21) and it is obvious that such a person could never look with favor on the religion taught by Jesus, and therefore would not be joyfully prophesying (9:9) the coming of a king of Christ's type.

Ch. 11:12 cannot be connected with the betrayal of Jesus considering that, although the sums of money are identical, in no way can the rest of this section be applied to the life or death of Jesus. Similarity in one phrase, when countered by dissimilarity in all the context, is insufficient evidence to justify accepting this passage as a Christological prophecy.

The same situation is found in the other "Messianic" passages of this section and one is justified in discarding these as well as the former verses from any compilation of prophecies pointing to a future leader of the type of Christ. The prevailing martial tenor is completely out of tune with the nature and aim of Jesus.

One may safely say that the confusion in interpretation of the book of Malachi arises out of the unfortunate translation of the Hebrew "מַלְאָכִי" as a proper noun rather than as a common noun, "my messenger". For that mistranslation there is no justification -- indeed it is difficult to understand why it was done.

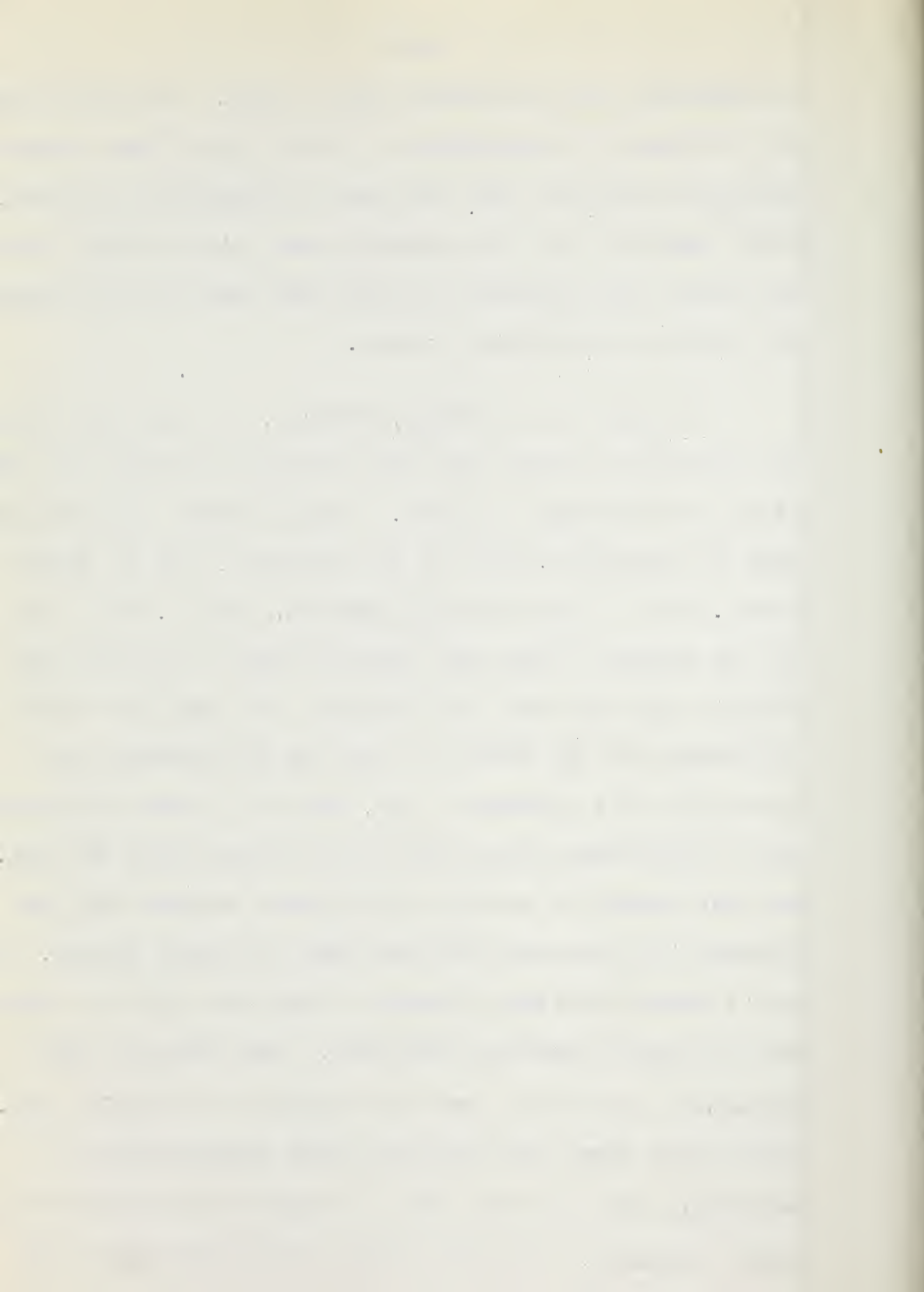
The general corruption of the Jewish nation as described in this book makes it fairly certain that it was written sometime soon after the return from the Babylonian exile, when the religious life had become an utterly soul-

less observance of sacrificial laws. Through the unknown writer of this book Yahweh declares his hatred of such "worship" and warns the people of a coming day of judgment, when "the Lord (will come) suddenly (to his temple)", (Ch. 3:1). There is no suggestion that this event might not take place for centuries; instead it is expected in the very near future and the people are warned implicitly to be ready. Neither the messenger nor the Lord can possibly refer to Jesus, for the prophet wrote these words four hundred odd years before the time of Christ, and was writing for the benefit of his contemporaries, not posterity. We cannot, then, look on the book of Malachi as prophetic of Christ himself, but rather of a day to be dreaded when Yahweh would come to judge a corrupt nation.

In summary one may safely say that in no writings of the Old Testament prophets do we find a prophecy of the coming of Jesus. The prophets were all men who saw the evils of their nation at their time and believed that such evils must be abolished if the nation were to survive. They were not writing for the benefit of readers hundreds of years later; in fact it is open to doubt if they thought their messages would be preserved that long. They wrote in the hope that what they declared to be the will of God would have some effect on their people and lead them into

a righteous and God-fearing way of life. No matter what may be done by commentators to wrest out of the prophetic writings a meaning that was never intended to be there, it still remains that the prophets were public-minded leaders who wrote and preached for their day and for the immediate, but only the immediate, future.

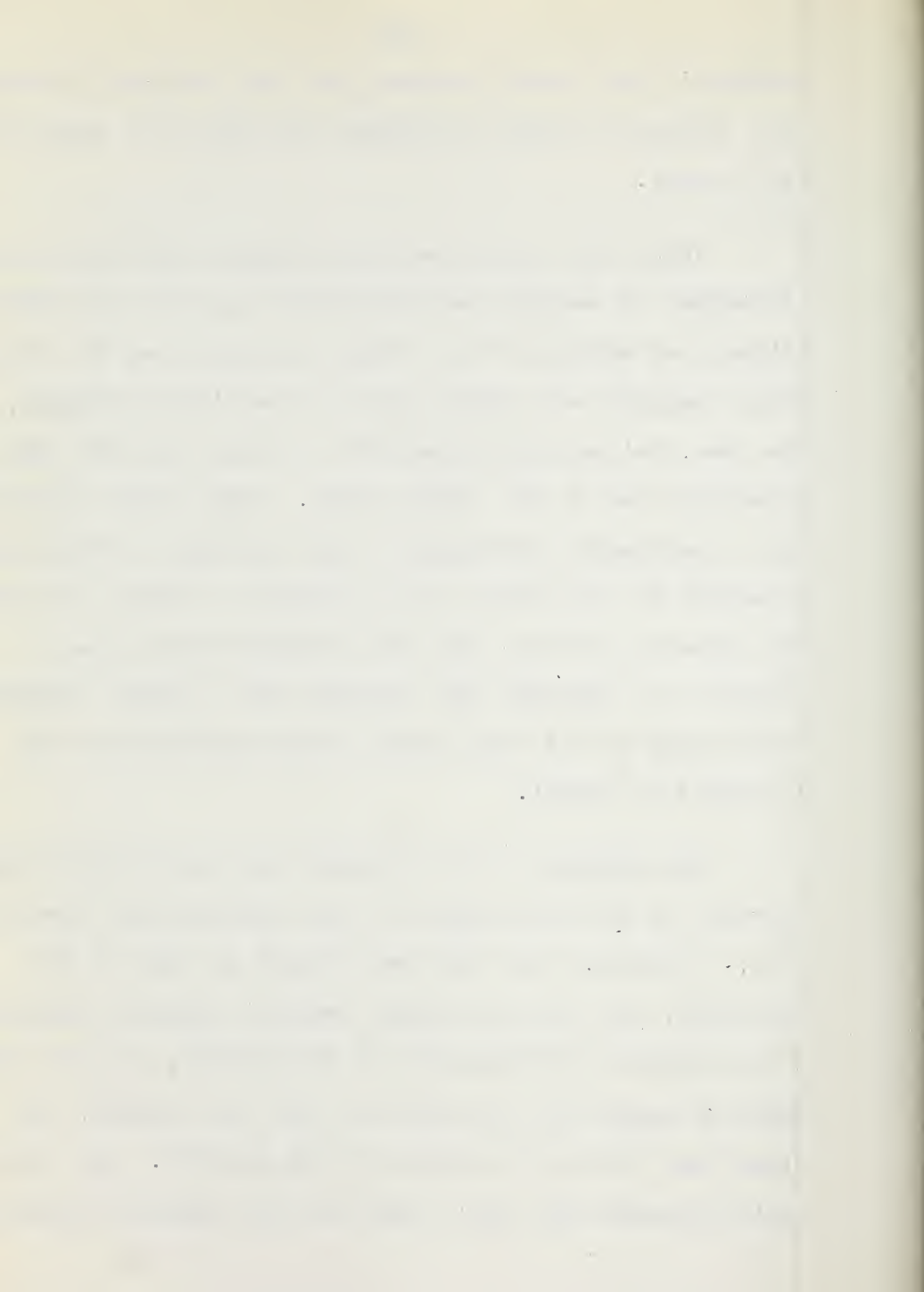
It would be a mistake, however, to say that there is no connection between the Old Testament writings and the life and teachings of Jesus. Jesus himself said he had not come to destroy the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfil them. (Matt. 5:17) His following remarks, from v. 20 to the end of the chapter, show what he meant when he said he came to "fulfil" the Law and the Prophets. He went far beyond observance of the letter of the Law and stressed the necessity of a spiritual life, and of a mental attitude to one's fellow man which would be in accord with the Law. It was not enough to refrain from murder because the Law forbade it: one must not even want to commit murder. A man's mental attitude towards a woman was just as important as his actual behaviour with her. The Holiness Code commanded the Jew to love his neighbor as himself (Lev. 19:18) but Jesus knew this had been interpreted as referring only to Jews, and so taught that everyone was a man's neighbor. In short, Jesus fulfilled the Law by



making it more nearly perfect, and the Prophets by teaching and living the highly spiritual and moral life which they had taught.

Jesus also fulfilled the writings found in the Old Testament by removing religion from the sphere of cold ritual and making of it a deeply spiritual way of living. Many prophets had spoken against ritualistic religion, as we know, but none had been able to break the hold such practices had on the Jewish faith. Their hopes were brought to a successful fulfilment in the teaching of Jesus as accepted by his church, or at least by a large part of it. He alone was able to lead his followers away from a religion of ceremony and legalism into a purely spiritual faith such as had been taught centuries before by the prophets of Israel.

The religion of the prophets was fulfilled in Jesus further in his development of the international idea of God, a doctrine which had been taught by some of the prophets, but which had never reached complete fruition. Jesus brooked no boundaries of nationality, race or creed when he taught his followers to love one another, and told them that God was the Father of all mankind. Any limitation imposed upon God's love for His children discredited



the universality of the deity in Christ's eyes and therefore could not be justified.

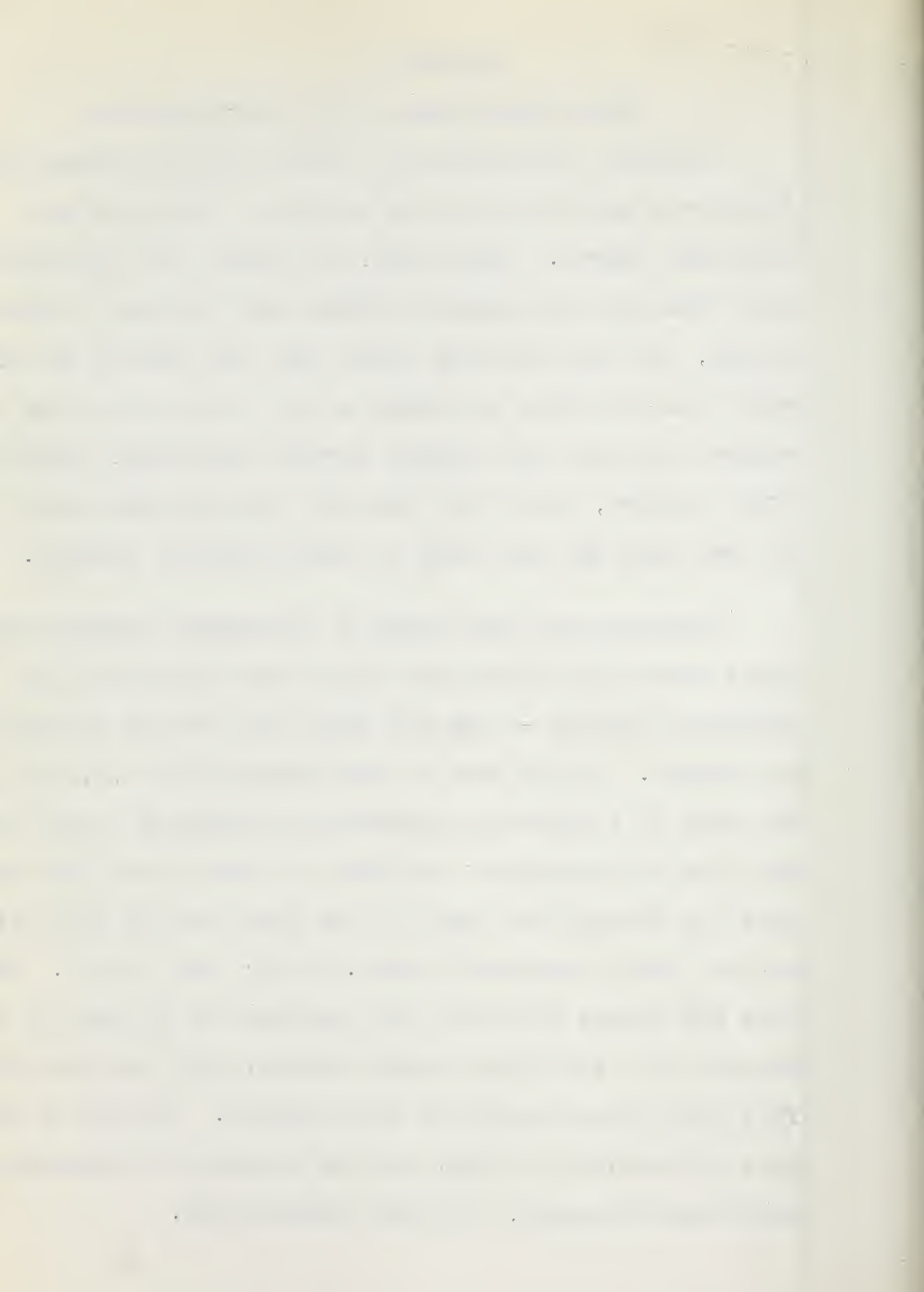
In these many ways, therefore, Jesus fulfilled the writings of the prophets of the Old Testament, and while we cannot rationally believe that any of them looked forward to such a leader as Jesus, we must believe that without the Old Testament teachings, the appearance of Jesus in Palestine would not have been possible, so strong is the link between him and the prophets of past centuries. The gradual ascendancy in moral and religious insight from the time of the earliest prophets is not one of crude prophecy but of the deepest spiritual emotions of man. Because of this the Old Testament is incomplete without the climax of Christ, and the New Testament is groundless without the foundation of the Law and the Prophets.

Chapter V

JEWISH MESSIANISM IN THE CHRISTIAN ERA

Messianic speculation in Jewish circles carried on relatively unaffected by the advent of Jesus and the Christian church. There were, of course, the inevitable minor flurries of argument between the scholars of the two faiths, but the Christian claim that the Messiah had already come and died to return to his people in no way prevented the Jews from looking forward hopefully, century after century, to the day when the true Messiah would come to free them and lead them to their rightful destiny.

Possibly the prime point of divergence between the early Jewish Christians and loyal Jews was the belief in a suffering Messiah -- one who would die for the salvation of his people. By the time of the Targums (200 A.D. and later) the idea of a suffering Messiah was repugnant to the Jews, and even the disciples' attitude to Jesus shows this belief that the Messiah was come to lead their nation into battle against their oppressors (Matt. 16:22; Luke 24:21). The Jews had always believed, and continued to believe in a Messiah of a definitely active nature, and Jesus failed to fill their requirements in this respect. Because of that he was denounced by them, and the heritage of Messianic prophecies remained, for them, unfulfilled.

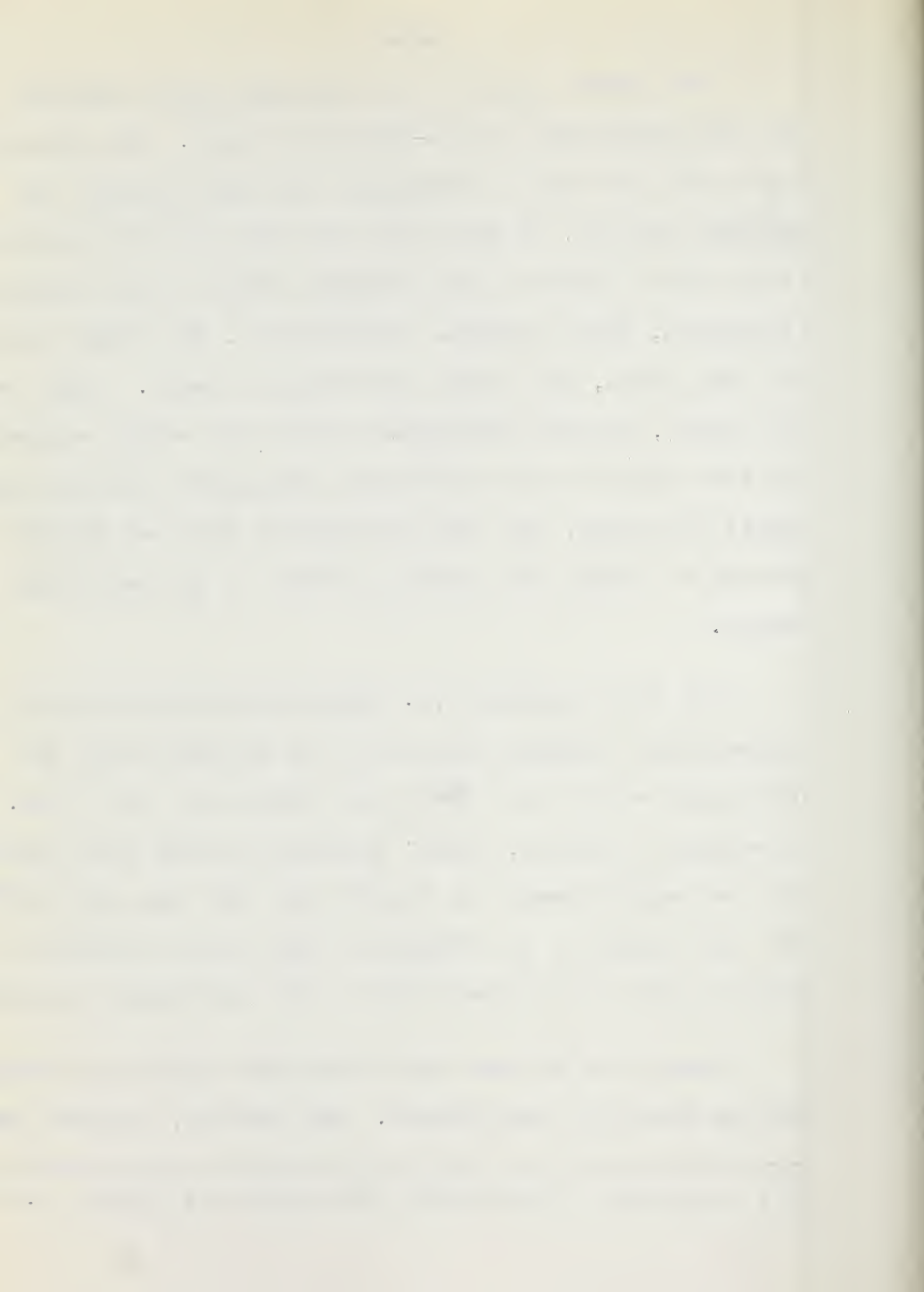


The general plan of the messianic world remained that of the Apocalypses of pre-Christian times. The Messianic age would end with a tremendous war waged against the heathen nations, in which war the Jews would be victorious. There would follow a new wonderful world in the restored Jerusalem, then a general resurrection, the divine judgment of the people, and reward according to merit. There were, of course, various divergences from this scheme according to the beliefs of the different apocalyptic writers and their followers, but such divergences were not drastic enough to change the general picture of the last days of the world.

The first century A.D. brought feverish Messianic speculation, largely because it was believed that the Millenium would start during the Creational year 5000. According to Silver, Jesus' Messianic claims were received by the people because he taught that the time was fulfilled for the coming of the kingdom of God, which coincided in the popular hope in the year 5000 in the Creational calendar.(1)

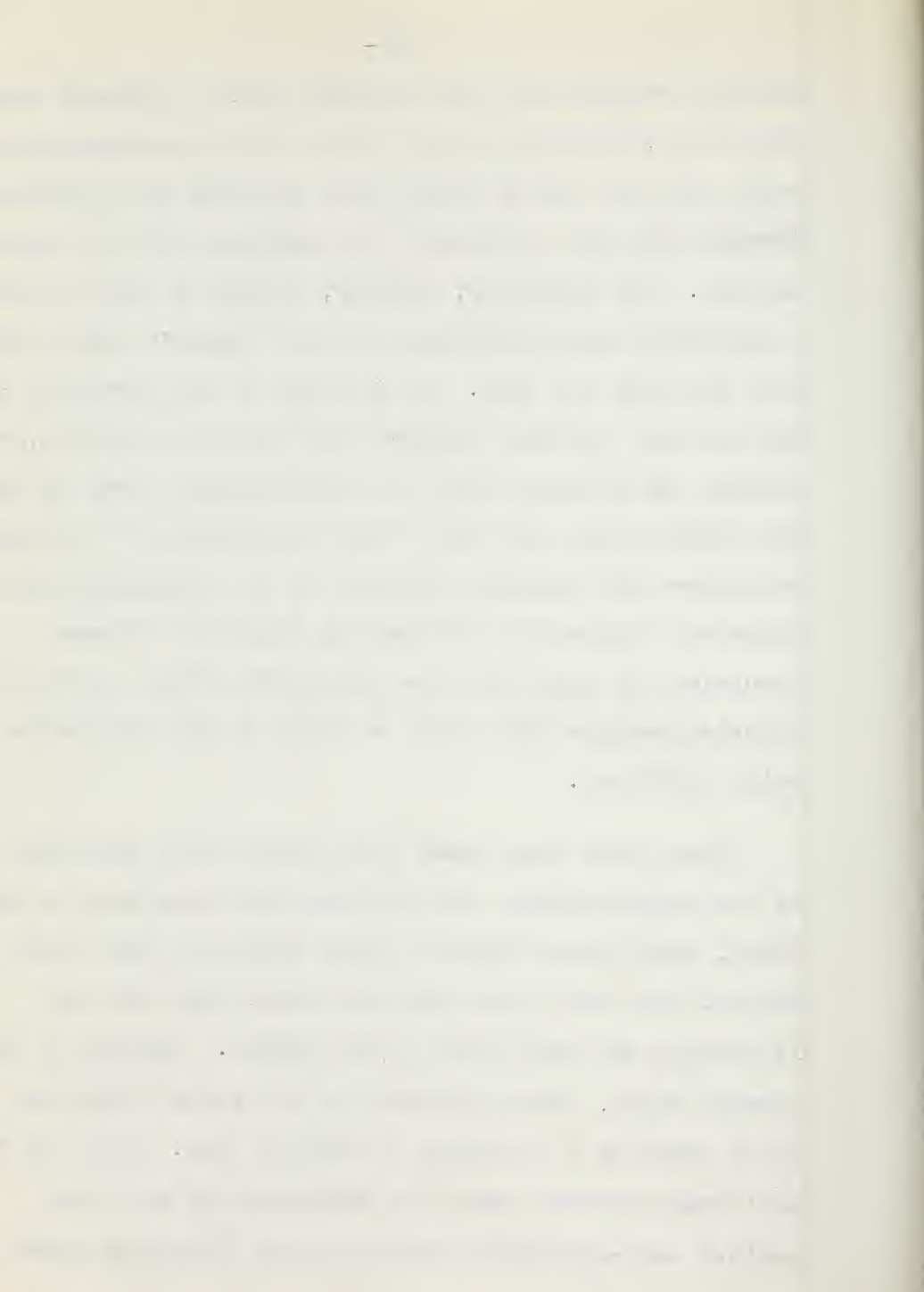
There were at this time four main schools of thought on the matter of the Messiah. The Zealots, as might be

(1) A History of Messianic Speculation in Israel, p. 6.



expected considering their martial nature, expected someone similar to, but even greater than, Judas Maccabaeas who would lead the Jewish nation into absolute and permanent freedom from all oppression, and dominion over all other nations. The Pharisees, however, looked on the Messiah as a perfectly human righteous ruler of Yahweh's people after they had been set free. In the idea of the mortality of the Messiah the Pharisees differed most from the Essenes, who thought the Messiah would be a supernatural envoy of God. The fourth group was that of the politicians of the day, who considered all Messianic thought to be a dangerous illusion; dangerous because it strained the relations between Jerusalem and Rome and hence endangered their positions; an illusion because there were no signs of the prophecies ever being fulfilled.

Apart from these four clear groups were the great mass of the common people, who believed that some day, in some place, there would appear a great leader of the Jewish people, who would carry out the divine plan for the liberation and exaltation of his people. Because of this fervent faith, every pretender to the title of Messiah could count on a following of varying size. This led to anti-Roman revolts under the leadership of one after another self-appointed Messiah, which finally resulted in



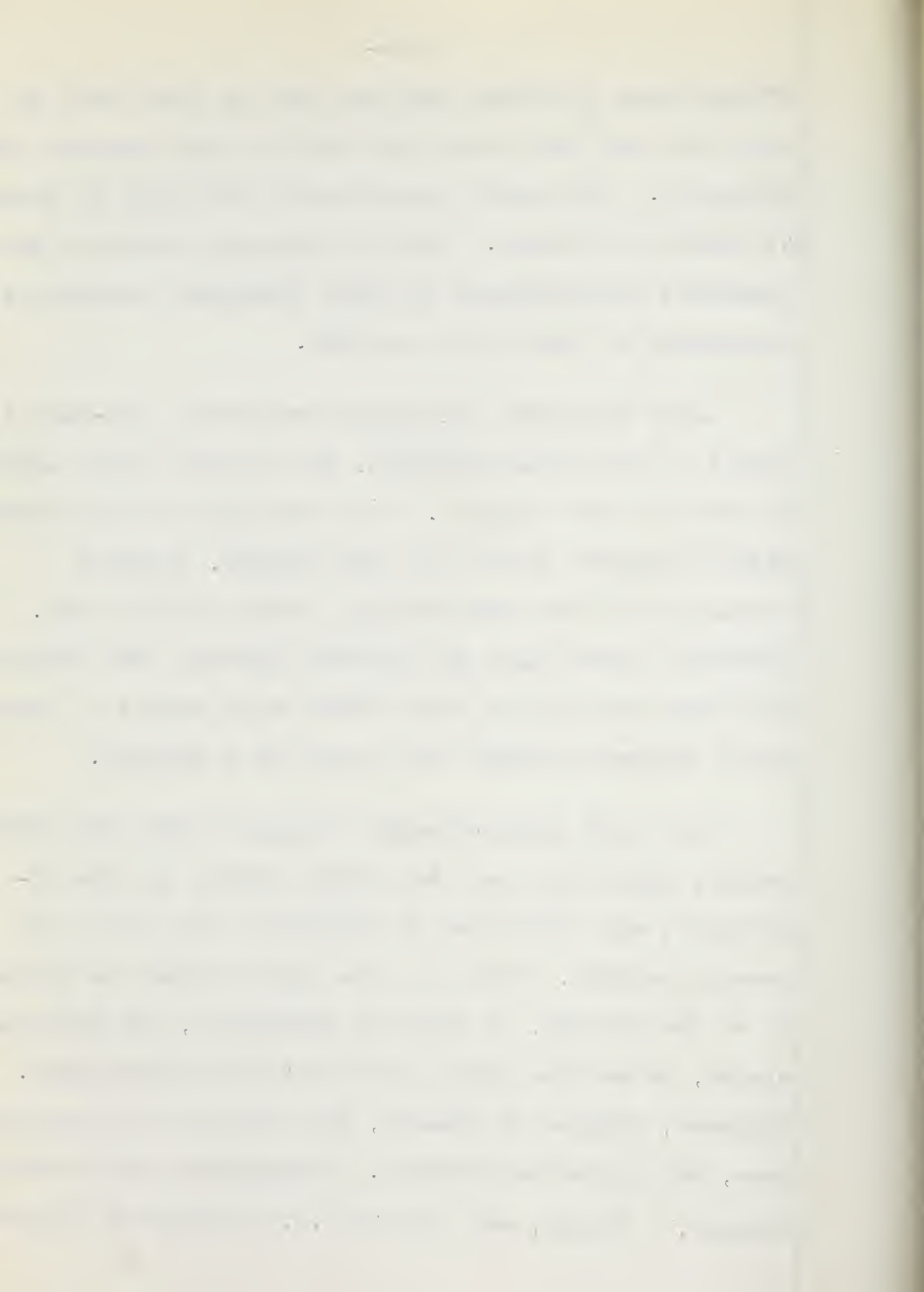
the complete downfall of the nation. The most disastrous of these revolts was that organized by the "Messiah" Bar Kochba, in 132-5 A.D. By the time this had been put down by the Roman armies the Jewish nation was completely devastated, so much so that further Messianic activity was discouraged for the next several centuries. The Rabbis began to fix on distant dates for the Messianic age rather than on the immediate future which had been the custom before the destruction of the Temple. The commonest date was some four hundred years in the future, corresponding to the four hundred years of the first exile in Egypt. Jewish credulity had been dealt a severe blow, and not until the fifth century did it fully recover.

As the fifth century progressed to its close, bringing with it the decline and fall of Roman power, Messianic speculation found a corresponding rise in popularity. Such study had received some encouragement in the third century due to political conditions at the time when, during the years 235-284 A.D. twenty emperors ruled over the Roman empire. The consensus of calculations pointed to the fifth century for the Redemption of Israel, and as the years went by the people again became ready to rebel. One pseudo-Messiah did appear at this time to prophesy a second crossing of the water for the Jewish people. This self-

styled Moses convinced numerous Jews in Crete that he was going to lead them across the ocean to the mainland of Palestine. The result was naturally the death by drowning of several followers. Most of them were saved but the immediate disappearance of their "Messiah" prevented any punishment of him for his perfidy.

Again Messianic calculation received a set-back as a result of this disappointment, but scholars still continued to write on that subject. The literature of the fifth and sixth centuries abounds in such thought, possibly encouraged by the international crisis at that time. This condition lasted into the seventh century, when Jerusalem was taken over by the Arabs after their defeat of Persia, which conquest aroused more hopes for a Messiah.

The first pseudo-Messiah to appear after the fifth century Moses was Isaac ben Yahub Obadiah Abu Isa al-Isfahani, who flourished at Isfahan at the end of the seventh century. There is some doubt whether he claimed to be the Messiah, or just his forerunner, but whatever his claims, he met the khalif in battle and was defeated. One follower, Yudghan of Hamadan, was acclaimed as Messiah by some, but gained no eminence. Contemporary with him was Serenus, a Syrian, who, in 720 A.D. promised to restore the



Jews to their home land and hence gained a wide following. However, he was soon brought to trial before the khalif and turned over to his fellow-countrymen as a self-confessed impostor.

Messianic speculation and calculation had always been influenced by contemporary affairs as affecting the Jews. Therefore it is not surprising that in these centuries of international discord there was considerable Messianic literature. Calculation of the exact date of the Redemption was rudely discouraged by the uneventful passing of the various dates fixed upon, but men still retained their high interest in the subject.

During the Mohammedan period, lasting roughly from the seventh until the thirteenth centuries, which includes the times of the Crusades, there was a large amount of Midrashic apocalyptic literature published. In these writings various dates were discussed as possible deadlines for the Redemption with more or less conviction. Some expected the Messiah to come immediately after the Arabs had conquered Persia, but as this event came and faded into history the fateful date was pushed further and further into the future by successive scholars. Only one author is known in all these writings, one named Saasia Gaon (882-994)

who based his calculations on three separate figures in Daniel. His calculations indicated that the Messiah would come after the passing of 1335 years. Unfortunately, he neglected to state the starting point of this era, so his prophecies were of interest only to a few who attempted to find the unknown date.

During the early part of this era the years 958-968 were generally decided on as the date of the Messiah's appearance, so when that decade approached popular interest reach high levels. There was great excitement in Israel, and scholars corresponded with friends in other countries throughout the known world discussing the question hopefully. The years in question passed without event, however, and Jewish hopes were once again crushed. One rather unexpected feature of this era is that, in spite of its significance to the hopeful Jews, there were only three pseudo-Messiahs from the years 600-1000 A.D., and none of these gained any following worthy of note. The years of the Crusades changed that situation, however, for during that time there appeared numerous self-appointed Messiahs.

The period of the Crusades deserves special mention in that it brought high Messianic feeling to prominence in both Christian and Jewish circles. Christians looked on these

wars as holy enterprises undertaken to free the land which gave birth to Jesus from the anti-Christian Mohammedans. Religious fervour all too often gives rise to religious intolerance, and in this case the Christians in Europe were no exception to that failing. The Crusades broke the spirit of the Jews in Germany particularly and brought depression, superstition and asceticism, fertile ground for Messianic speculation.(1)

Several prominent Rabbis during the eleventh and twelfth centuries indulged in Messianic calculation, and all decided that the Redemption was to come fairly soon. Such calculations became more and more intricate as time went on and previous dates had been discredited by harsh reality. Complex mathematics and allegories were put to use to produce new dates that would have a semblance to logic behind them, such as would convince those who were eager to be shown that the future held prosperity and glory for the Jewish nation.

Along with this Messianic excitement came various false Messiahs who met with short-lived success and then were brought down from their leadership by hostile powers. The first important one of these was David Alroy, who came

(1) A History of Messianic Speculation in Israel, p. 63.

from the north of Persia from one of the free Jewish tribes who claim their descent from the lost tribes. Starting in Kurdistan in 1160 he gathered a large following in a campaign to lead the Jews back to Palestine at a time when the sultan was involved with the Crusaders. He was soon put down, however, and disappeared completely.

Possibly the boldest of all these upstarts was Abraham ben Samuel Abulafia, who went to Rome in 1281 and attempted to convert the Pope to Judaism with imprisonment as a result. He escaped and four years later announced himself in Sicily as the Messiah, and proclaimed the year 1290 as the beginning of the millenium. The fixed date came and went with no result, and Abulafia disappeared without trace, apart from two obscure disciples who met the same end.

Immediately after this a certain Nissim ben Abraham, of Avila, rose into prominence and declared 1295 to be the date of Redemption. The result of his attempt at power was the same as with his predecessors.

Still undeterred, the Jewish people later became convinced that 1358 would bring the long-awaited Messiah. There was less writing on the subject in this period, and only one claimant to the title of Messiah, who gained little prominence, but the generally held belief was that the

appointed time was near. Such hopes were dealt a particularly vicious blow through the occurrence of the Black Death during the middle of the century. Instead of Redemption the Jews got the plague, and not for approximately 150 years was anything more said about the promised new world. Even the traditionally patient Jews sickened of the subject after this latest blow and they were content to live as best they could without hoping for anything better as a result of divine intervention.

The sixteenth century was one of great Messianic interest to both Christians and Jews. The Christian church was undergoing the Protestant Reformation, and religious feeling ran high, resulting in anti-Semitic activities in some countries in Europe. Jews were expelled from Germany, Spain, Portugal, and to some extent from Italy. As might be expected, these refugees experienced a revival of Messianic belief and carried it to the various districts around the Mediterranean in which they settled in large numbers. Coming from the intellectual West, they dominated the literary life of those communities and produced correspondingly fervent belief in the approach of the Messianic age in their new homes.

Such hopes were helped by the ill feeling between the

Mohammedans and the Christian persecutors of the Jews, which led the Jews at least to contemplate the possibility of the defeat of the Christian nations. This was further assisted by the schism in the Christian church caused by the Reformation, and the Jews had definite hopes that their enemies were facing destruction through exterior force and interior disunity. It is worthy of note also that the discovery of America in 1492 brought forth the suggestion that the lost ten tribes of Israel were inhabiting this new world. These three factors all contributed to the Jews' hope that the day of Redemption was in the very near future.

This century witnessed a revival also in speculation as to the date in which the Messiah would reveal himself, and of the twelve prominent calculators Isaac Abarbanel is the most noteworthy. Abarbanel wrote three books on the subject and decided that the Messiah was born at some time immediately preceding the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492.

Along with Messianic interest came the inevitable false Messiahs, although none of the three who gained fame actually claimed to be the Messiah, but were given that title by their followers.

At the close of the previous century David Reubeni,

claiming to be emissary of a mysterious King of Kaibar, went to Egypt, Palestine, Venice, and then to Rome to see the Pope in an effort to get military aid in a war against the sultan. From there he went to Portugal's King John III, and while there was successful enough in his mission to merit the admiration of quite a number of Portugese Jews, who were surprised at any Jew being so close to an anti-Semitic ruler.

Not the least of his followers was Solomon Molko, a Christian Jew who reverted to Judaism with no encouragement from Reubeni. Molko went from Portugal to Turkey and there gained considerable support through a mysteriously gained knowledge of Judaism and a rather occult mysticism. He then returned to Europe and met Reubeni, now discredited in Portugal and living in Italy. Molko had prophesied that the new kingdom would come in 1540, and the sack of Rome in 1527 lent credence to his forecast. He later went to Rome and there was arrested by the Inquisition, at the instigation of his Jewish enemies, as a renegade Christian, for which herecy he was sentenced to death through burning. The final fate of Reubeni is unknown, for nothing more is known of him following his meeting with Molko in Italy.

Another leader who never claimed Messiahship was Isaac

ben Solomon Ashkenazi Luria, who professed to be the forerunner of the Messiah. He looked on his principle disciple, Hayyim Vital Calabrez as a man unsoiled by sin, and on Luria's death Vital succeeded him and claimed to be Messiah ben Joseph, to be followed by Messiah ben David. During Vital's lifetime a rival appeared named Abraham Shalom, who claimed to be Messiah ben David. All three, however, had little effect on the Jewish race, and little is known of the latter years of either Vital or Shalom. They had their short time of fame and some power, but eventually disappeared into oblivion.

The seventeenth century brought a further decline in the fortunes of the Jews in Europe. Ghettoes were still common in all too many countries, and in Poland particularly the Jews suffered. As the government of Poland began to decline the Jesuits took charge and focussed hatred on the Jews with terrible results. Then the Cossacks invaded Poland bringing with them a two year reign of terror. Poland, however, was merely an extreme case of conditions prevalent throughout Europe.

With these conditions making Jewish life desperate the victims turned their attention on the future and more than ever showed active interest in Messianic speculations and

calculations. The year of years was now set at 1648 by most scholars and Jews throughout the world were in a state of high excitement. Hopes were heightened by the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) in the belief that such a long war could be only the often-mentioned "pangs of the Messiah" which would precede the coming of the Messiah.

During this war a boy was born who was to become the most remarkable and influential of all pseudo-Messiahs. Shabbethai Zebi, born in 1621 or 1626, even as a boy had little interest in the orthodox teaching of the temple schools and concentrated on the more mystic writings relevant to Messianism. His father had learned of the common prophecy that the Messiah would appear in 1648, and the new era would come in 1666, and looked on his son as so nearly divine that Shabbethai became encouraged to the point of revealing himself to be the Messiah in the appointed year for his appearance. He was banished from Smyrna by the Rabbinical authorities and wandered around the Orient for some time until the approach of the year 1666 brought him back to Jerusalem, not as the Messiah, but as a canvasser for public relief during impending calamity. At this time he married a woman who claimed to be the appointed wife of the Messiah, then returned to Smyrna to reveal himself publicly as the Messiah. This gained him absolute

power over the Jewish community.

Shabbethai now became famous, but was arrested by the sultan during a visit to Constantinople. His imprisonment, however, served only to increase his influence, even though he was removed to Abydos. While there he interviewed Nehemiah Ha-Kohen, who had claimed to be the forerunner of the Messiah, an interview which ended in mutual dissatisfaction. Nehemiah then fled to Constantinople, accepted Mohammedanism and denounced Shabbethai.

Following this Shabbethai was moved to Adrianople, where he finally realized the danger of his position and himself embraced Mohammedanism, announcing to his followers that such was God's will. This, of course, cost him nearly all his followers, and he himself ultimately disappeared completely, leaving only one trace in the formation of a Judaistic Mohammedan sect which survives to this day.

Shabbethai Zebi was followed by a host of petty "Messiahs", none of whom became very influential. The last to become seriously accepted was Jacob Frank (ca. 1775) an apostate several times over, who finally turned Christian and advised his followers to do the same. Only one more need be mentioned, and not because of his following. Moses Hayyim Luzzatto (1707-47) was remarkable for the fact that

he conscientiously thought himself to be divinely inspired. He was finally banished by the Rabbis of Venice and wandered into Palestine where he soon died of the plague.

The last quarter of the eighteenth century thus witnessed the end of recurrent Messianic enthusiasm in the modern world. Not since the time of Jacob Frank has any section of Jewry been stirred into a turmoil by the appearance of self-appointed Messiahs, and Jews throughout the world became content to pursue such happiness as they could gain, either discarding the whole Messianic hope, or relegating it to a passively awaited event.

Before passing on to another field of study, however, it would be well to note certain features common to this speculation throughout the centuries of its prevalence. All calculations as to the date on which the Messiah would reveal himself to the waiting people were based on complicated interpretations of material found in the Old Testament with the minor exception of astrology, which, although an ancient practice with the Jews, never occupied a dominant position among the calculators. The most common method was the interpretation of the book of Daniel, which lent itself well to explanations which at times became almost wondrously complicated because of its mysterious references to unnamed

persons, countries and dates. While other Biblical texts were also used, this book was always the favorite of the scholars.

Many speculators favored a comparison with past Jewish exiles as a method to determine the length of time which must pass before the appearance of the Messiah. They had records of the lengths of the Egyptian and Babylonian exiles and from this material deduced how long Israel must remain in its contemporary bondage before its final liberation through divine intervention.

Not satisfied with the complexity of those methods, other students of eschatology turned to a practice termed Gematria for the key to the puzzle of Israel's destiny. This system of the interpretation of a word through the numerical value of its letters gave rise to three variations notarikon, the taking of each letter of a word as the initial letter of another word; ziruf or hiluf, the transposition of the letters of a word; temurah, the substitution of one letter for another. It will be readily seen that such methods gave considerable scope to the scholar. Gematria in general was bounded in its findings only by the ingenuity of the writer and the number of dates which were fixed upon for the appearance of the Messiah was infinite. It reached

great heights in the seventeenth century and was of great importance in the progress of the Shabbetaian movement, the last great revival of active Messianism in modern times.

It should not be considered, however, that such speculation went unhindered. At all times there was definite and active opposition to such thought, though the opposition fluctuated in direct proportion to the prominence of Messianic calculation. This opposition was based largely on the fear that when any given "date" passed without the hoped-for Redemption, the people would refuse to believe there would ever be any Redemption or Messiah. There was also a fear of pseudo-Messiahs appearing to take advantage of the people's hopes, a fear which, as we have seen, was all too well justified.

There were four major groups of opponents in Jewish circles. Some categorically denied the coming of a Messiah; others denied such an advent because they recognized no basis for hope in either the Bible or the oral tradition. Still another group admitted Biblical basis for Messianic faith but held that the prophecies were undecipherable and purposely hidden while the fourth group declared that Redemption would come at any time whatsoever, depending only on Israel's complete repentance. But whatever their reason all members of these four groups, among whom were scholars

of no mean repute opposed without compromise all forms of speculation concerning the date on which God in His Wisdom would intervene in the affairs of man to rescue his children from their misery.

It would be difficult to say, with any degree of certainty, how effective this opposition was in convincing the common people that the divine plan was not to be disclosed through even the most diligent search of the Scriptures. Possibly it prevented many Jews from falling into line during the various Messianic revivals and campaigns, and thus spared them from bitter disappointment and heartache. At any rate, it eventually triumphed in the eighteenth century and it is to be hoped that the victory will be permanent. Since that date the fortunes of Israel have fluctuated violently, but there have been no recurrence of wild, uncontrolled speculation, nor appearances of any pseudo-Messiahs.

During the eighteenth century itself the Jews, in general, degenerated and lived almost completely segregated from their Gentile neighbors. Social intercourse was kept to a minimum and even the children had very incomplete knowledge of anything concerning the land in which they lived or the people of that land.

This condition prevailed throughout the most of Europe until the following century, when Jews began to enter more into public life, taking up the professions to a large extent. There is no doubt that the French Revolution played some considerable part in the liberation of the European Jews, with its emphasis on liberty, equality and fraternity. The emancipation, unfortunately, was short-lived, for during the last quarter of the nineteenth century the curse of anti-Semitism descended on parts of Europe, venting its hatred of the Jews through persecution in Russia and ostracism in Germany, Austria and France.

One result of this cultural degeneration was the birth of Zionism, a movement founded in 1895 by Theodor Herzl. Its founder hoped to see all Jews return to their ancestral home of Palestine, there to restore their identity as a unified nation rather than remain in their present scattered state. Even this, however, did not constitute a Messianic movement, for the motive for the movement was not the hope that, once united in Palestine, the Jews would become the one dominant world power. This movement, it may be noted, is still in existence, though not very powerful, but has met with little success for reasons not connected with the field of this thesis.

Messianic hope, however, has not died out completely in the Jewish faith by any means, though it has undergone definite changes in some circles. The Jewish religion has become divided into two general groups -- the Orthodox and the Liberal. The Orthodox Jew still includes in his daily devotions a prayer for the coming of the Messiah to lead Israel to its God and its destiny among the nations of the world, a prayer that has remained unchanged since its origin. The Liberal Jew has interpreted the term Messiah so as to refer to a personification of a system of ideas and doctrine. To him the coming of the Messiah will be the universal acceptance and domination of Jewish ideas and culture. The Kingdom of God will come for the Liberal Jew when all people repent and are redeemed, not through any divine act of sudden intervention, but through the consecration of the souls of all mankind to the godly life.

In this latter belief is seen something very closely akin to the Christian faith. Like the Liberal Jew, the liberal Christian looks forward, not to the return of Jesus in the flesh to set up the Kingdom of God, but to the attainment of that ideal through the consecrated efforts of individual Christians throughout the world, great and small. In this respect Jews and Christians are working together,

and there is reason for hope that it will become the means whereby these two faiths will become even more closely knit in a common desire to see the day when all people will live together as one family under God, when the Jew will recognize Jesus as the completion or fulfillment of his prophets and the Christian will recognize the Jew as his spiritual forefather.

Chapter VI

ESCHATOLOGY IN THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS

As has already been noted, the common people of Galilee in the time of Jesus were eagerly awaiting the arrival of the Messiah of God. It is not surprising to find Mark attributing Messianic significance to Jesus during his Galilean ministry and relating how the crowds, with glowing expectancy, hounded this new Messiah so that to avoid them he sometimes had to speak from boats (Mark 3:7-12). In vain attempts to break away from this popular obsession Jesus travelled from one place to another, but He always met with the same reception. The loyalty and enmity which His person produced were the seeds of the conflict which were ultimately to issue in His death.

Jesus' attitude to this messianism was not without its problems, for while we have record of his opposition to it, yet we also read in his own sayings definite eschatological prophecies. This latter factor in his teachings has led to misunderstanding as to the purpose of his ethical teachings, and to their intended duration. The first step in understanding Christian messianism must then be to comprehend the position Jesus took, through a study of the writings of Paul, which give us our earliest record of Christianity in practice

and of the gospels, in which certain false colourings arising from the writers' preconceptions will have to be cleared away in order to arrive at a true picture.

Since Jesus confined his teachings to the spoken, rather than the written, word, we must search the earliest Christian writings in order to discover his eschatological beliefs. This necessity turns us to the letters of the apostle Paul for two reasons: they were written before the Synoptics; Paul's messianic beliefs had features which he did not draw from his Jewish faith, and therefore must have taken either from his knowledge of the teachings of Jesus, from the leaders of the newly-formed church, or from the Hellenistic culture of the extra-Palestinian world of that time, from which Paul came.

Two lines united to form Christianity -- Judaism and Hellenism; but twenty years after the death of Jesus Christianity was fast parting company with Judaism. That this change was taking place we know through Paul's arguments as to the validity of the Torah in the Christian community, e.g., Romans 4; Gal. 5. The name Messiah was discarded in favor of Christ, and with that change in terminology came a change in connotation. Jewish thought taught of a Messiah who would be strong, warlike, just, and

somewhat fierce. Paul, on the other hand, taught Jesus as meek and reasonable (II Cor. 10:1); a man who loved us (Rom. 8:37), and whom we ought to love (I Cor. 16:22). Here was a way of life which, in Paul's mind, was worthy of imitation, albeit largely a reversal of what he had been taught as a strict Pharisee.(1) In this way Paul taught faith in a Messiah who had none of the features of the Messiah of Jewish expectation.

There is no doubt that Christians of the outside world were influenced by the Greek mystery religions, with their dying and rising gods. Christianity, a new and none too powerful religion, could not help but be affected by these faiths and rituals of Hellenistic culture. From that world came Paul, an educated Jew who would be familiar with Greek religion and Greek modes of thinking in general. He was, therefore, highly aware of the fact that parochial Jewish Christianity would not be acceptable in Hellenistic circles, and saw how 'Christianity must be made universal in its outlook and philosophical in nature.

The apparently spontaneous nature of his conversion must also have influenced Paul in his conception of the mission of

(1) cf. McNeill, Spinka, Willoughby, Environmental Factors in Christian History, p. 47.

Christ. He felt that with his acceptance of Christ as his personal Saviour and Lord he had been released from the power of sin, the bondage of the Torah, the principalities and powers of the height and depth, and had gained access to a new and wonderful spiritual life. If, then, this had happened to him, rabid persecutor of the Christians, it must be the result of divine grace and love, must be available to all mankind, irregardless of race, and must be taught along international lines.

With this realization in mind, Paul proceeded to remold the Jesus-tradition, which he had received. The fact that he retained parts of this tradition indicated the presence of an Oral Gospel, since Paul speaks of sayings of Jesus as if they were well known to his hearers, even though there was no written gospel at that time. There was some form of gospel being carried throughout the Christian world, and Paul was familiar with it, since he makes allusions to various events in the earthly life of Jesus which would be meaningless if the people were not familiar with it. Thus in I Cor. 11:23f he reminds them of the Last Supper, of which they had already been told. The crucifixion is referred to in I Cor. 2:8; 5:7, etc. The traits in Jesus' character referred to previously would be based on stories of his life which Paul had already shared with

the new Christians whom he had converted.

In the interpretation of this life, however, Paul was influenced by Hellenism. Jewish monotheism still held him, but he refused to subordinate Jesus to God in actuality, though he does allow it in theory (Rom. 15:5). He is leaning towards the Logos solution which makes God and Christ equal in nature, but subordinate in function (I Cor. 8:6). The purpose of the death of Jesus is also brought more parallel to the death of the god in the Mystery religions: the convert dies so far as his old life is concerned, but rises with Christ into the godly life (Rom. 6:3ff). In a similar way the magical element of the Mystery rituals is applied to at least one of the Sacraments. The Lord's Supper is believed to affect insincere communicants like poison, (II Cor. 11:27ff).

In this way Paul made of Christianity a religion which would be readily understandable to the people of the Hellenistic world, and so surmounted the worst obstacle in the path of a universally-minded church. Instead of teaching about a Jew who claimed to be the Messiah but was killed on the accursed cross, he was able to tell of the sacrificial death of a man who was raised to near-parity with God, and who could raise all men to his life if they

would have faith in him and in God.

One prominent feature of Jewish Messianism was retained --faith in the Messianic kingdom. I Thess. 4:15-17 shows that Paul expected to witness the return of Christ and his establishment of a new world order in the near future. Later in his lifetime this hope of being still alive at the expected time waned and was replaced by the faith that he would be with Christ after death (II Cor. 5:6-8). Still, however, he has the firm conviction that the present times will shortly be replaced by the Messianic age, as is shown in I Cor. 7:31.

It is a debatable question whether Paul's preference for celibacy (I Cor. 7:1) is based on his eschatological beliefs or on the custom of the age. Dobschutz holds that "... it was the asceticism of his age which influenced him in regarding marriage as the lower state." (1) Goodspeed favors the other alternative, saying, "... it was his messianic expectation that largely controlled his views on marriage." (2) Paul's reason for advocating celibacy is

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- (1) E. von Dobschutz, The Eschatology of the Gospels, pp. 12-13.
(2) E. J. Goodspeed, An Introduction to the New Testament, p. 49.

that it leaves the person free to give complete loyalty to God (I Cor. 7:32-34), and argument which could very well arise from the belief that Christians have little time left in which to work. It would seem more probable, then, that from Paul's expectation of the early return of the glorified Christ came his unfavorable attitude towards marriage.

In view of the presence of this new Messianism in the letters of Paul, and in view of the large amount of Messianism and eschatology in the Gospels, it would seem very probable that these features originated in Jesus. However, in this view not all scholars share. S. J. Case states that while the synoptists would say that Jesus placed paramount importance on his Messiahship yet "Jesus had been more concerned with fidelity to the cause of God, whose spokesman fittingly claimed genuine inspiration but not official installation. It is very doubtful whether Messiahship from Jesus' own point of view would have been a category of sufficient value to serve him significantly at a critical moment in his experience." (1) In that author's estimation, the early Christians were responsible for the distinctively Christian Messianism which we find in the New Testament, and particularly in the Synoptics.

(1) S. J. Case, Studies in Early Christian Messianism, p. 322.

This position is taken on several grounds. Messianic features are by no means uniformly distributed throughout the Gospels, there being large sections like the Sermon on the Mount where none is found. Jesus talks often of the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven, but never of the Kingdom of the Messiah, which leads one to believe that he probably belonged to the non-Messianic school of eschatology. Further, states Case, it is obvious that none of his disciples, during his lifetime, looked on him as an eschatological Messiah, while some believed that he was the Messiah who would deliver them from Roman bondage.(1) Having this conception of the mission of Jesus, the disciples undoubtedly went through a crisis when the object of their faith suffered the ignominious death of the cross. Eventually they surmounted this obstacle, saw that their old Messianic faith was wrong and sublimated it into a faith that Jesus had risen from the dead, ascended into heaven, and would presently return to the material world to set up his Kingdom. So strong was this belief that some returned to Jerusalem to await his return, there keeping the Jewish Law most diligently, and preparing, according to Case,

(1) *ibid.* p. 324.

records of the heroic doings of their Lord. At the same time, the less inspired followers of Christ wandered farther afield, spreading his teachings, and for that purpose compiling his sayings and preserving them in writing. Finally the two groups were forced together and the result was that the "sayings" and "doings" were combined into one story of the life of Jesus, containing the ethical teachings of the extra-Palestinian records and the Messianic features of the Jerusalem records. From these circumstances our Gospels arose, containing strictly ethical teachings side by side with Messianic prophecies.(1)

Case infers from the above circumstances that Christian Messianism in the Synoptics is the work of Peter and his friends in Jerusalem, and that they accepted the recorded sayings of Jesus only because advancing time forced them to recognize the need for ethical teachings as well as Messianic doings.(2) Such an idea, however, is by no means universally accepted. It rests on the assumption that the two records postulated by Case, the "sayings" and the "doings" were combined before the writing of Mark (ca. 70 A.D.), and even before the earlier Q source. There

(1) *ibid.* pp. 328ff.

(2) *ibid.* p. 331.

seems to be little or no basis to believe, however, that there was a written gospel at this time. Before one can decide how much, if any, of the Messianism and eschatology ascribed to Jesus is authentic the various Messianic passages in the Synoptics must be studied, having in mind their probable origins, their parallels in the three gospels, if any, and their appropriateness to the life of Jesus in general.

The problem is further complicated by the tendency of the synoptists to colour the sayings of Jesus so as to lend to them a stronger Messianic tone than might have originally been the case. They were writing with the acknowledged intention of bringing a gospel of life to the heathen, and this favorably prejudiced viewpoint naturally crept into their works.

A clear example of such treatment of the teachings of Jesus is found in the parallel passages Matt. 7:21-23, Luke 6:46, presumably taken from the Q tradition. Here lip service, unaccompanied by action is condemned, but by adding vv. 22-23 Matthew transforms the section into an eschatological prophecy of condemnation. It is, however, fairly certain that these verses are not authentic in that context since they constitute an interruption in the

continuous Q narrative, and are found in Luke 13:27 in quite a different context. The obvious conclusion is that Matthew has transferred the two verses from their original place in Q to this passage in his gospel in order to strengthen Jesus' condemnation of insincerity by giving it an eternal nature.

Another instance of such treatment is in Matthew's version of the two parables on the Kingdom of heaven (13: 24-30; 47-50). From their highly similar natures one concludes that these were originally a couplet. The comparisons -- wheat harvesting and fishing -- indicate that Jesus had something continuous in mind, but by inserting a highly eschatological allegorical interpretation of the parable of the wheat and tares between the two parables Matthew makes them both prophecies of the last judgment.

The most extensive example of such additions of eschatological teaching is that of the "Little Apocalypse" (Mark 13). This is almost certainly an independent section incorporated by Mark into his gospel, and copied with additions by Matthew and Luke. Mark 13:14(b) along with v. 20 indicates very strongly that these prophecies were not spoken by Jesus, but are the written works of some unknown eschatologist. There is considerable similarity between passages in this section and authentic sayings of Jesus

(cf. Mark 13:15,16 with Luke 17:31; Mark 13:21-23 with Luke 17:23 and Matt. 24:26; Mark 13:26 with Mark 8:38 and Mark 14:62), but it is still a virtually undisputed contention that this "Little Apocalypse" originated neither in Jesus nor in Mark.

Christ's saying concerning Jerusalem illustrates a different type of manipulation of the tradition as recorded in Matt. 23: 37-39 and its parallel in Luke 13:34-35. The closing words, "Ye shall not see me until ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" could be interpreted either eschatologically or historically. Matthew, by placing the passage after the entry into Jerusalem in his gospel, makes it an eschatological prophecy while Luke, by placing it well before the entry in his record, shows that he considers it a historical prophecy of the triumphal entry.

In the same way Luke revises a prophecy in the "Little Apocalypse" (Mark 13:14 " Matt. 24:15 " Luke 21:20). Mark's version, "But when ye see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not ... " is very vague. Matthew clarifies the reference by inserting "... standing in the holy place ..." but Luke, evidently deciding that such cryptic talk is unjustified, states flatly, "But when ye

see Jerusalem compassed with armies ..." and in that way makes this prophetic of the fall of Jerusalem.(1)

There remains yet another method by which the Synoptists, notably Matthew, strengthened their teaching of Jesus as Messiah. They had at their disposal a vast literature, the Old Testament, in which was a wealth of prophecies, many of which could be applied to Jesus, albeit with the necessity of a certain amount of isogesis and allegorization. If the religion of Jesus was to be acceptable to the Jews, it must first be proven that in Jesus was the fulfillment of these prophecies, which would make him the Messiah of Jewish expectation. Mark and Luke paid little attention to this problem, but Matthew, throughout his gospel, recalls prophecies of the Old Testament, not always correctly, and fits them into the pattern of the life and death of Jesus. The chart which follows will serve to illustrate this more clearly.

Matthew	Mark	Luke	Source
1:22			Isaiah 7:14
2:5f			Micah 5:2
2:15			Hosea 11:1
2:17			Jeremiah 31:15

(1) see further E. von Dobschutz, The Eschatology of the Gospels, Lecture II.

Matthew	Mark	Luke	Source
2:23			Isaiah 11:1 (?)
3:3	1:2(?)	3:4	Isaiah 40:3
4:14f			Isaiah 9:1,2
8:17			Isaiah 53:4
11:10	1:2	7:27	Malachi 3:1
12:40		11:30	Jonah 1:17
13:14			Isaiah 6:9, 10
13:35			Psalms 78:2
21:4			Isaiah 62:11
26:54ff			Unknown
27:9			Zechariah 11:12,13
27:35			Psalms 22:18
	15:28	22:37	Isaiah 53:12
		(variant context)	

As may readily be seen, not all these prophecies which Matthew recalls are strictly accurate. The only possible source of that in Matt. 2:23 is Isaiah 11:1, but it is based on the resemblance, in the Hebrew, of "branch" and "Nazarene". This is anything but sufficient proof of a prophecy of Jesus' Messiahship. Another instance is in Matt. 27:9, where the writer recalls the words of "Jeremy the prophet" yet the source of the prophecy is not Jeremiah but Zechariah. Again the source for Matt. 26:54ff is unknown and cannot be found in the Old Testament.

However, apart entirely from these mistakes made by Matthew in his zeal to prove the Messiahship of Jesus there is one great fault in the whole plan. As has already been shown in a previous chapter dedicated to such prophecies, there is no saying or writing in the Old Testament which

can be logically interpreted as referring to any person to come in the distant future. Therefore we must conclude that all Matthew's work in this regard is valueless for us in this day, since none of the prophecies he cites can possibly refer to Christ. The same conclusion, of course, applies equally to the other gospels.

In the above ways -- allegorical interpretation, changed context and isogenesis, -- the evangelists drew a picture of Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah, showing their belief in him as such. It is apparent that Jesus was regarded by at least Matthew and Luke as of Davidic lineage. They take the time to trace his ancestry not only to David but to Abraham, (cf. Matt. 1:10 with Luke 3:23-34). However, it would seem that no great importance was attached to this ancestry by either Jesus or the disciples since in Matt. 22:4-46; Mark 12:35-37; Luke 20:41-44 we are told of Jesus deprecating the traditional belief in the Davidic descent of the expected Messiah. Quite possibly Jesus was descended from David, but he gave the disciples no basis on which to stress the matter, thus showing a considerable lack of interest in it.

In respect to the coming death of Jesus there were some misgivings. The gospels tell of Jesus' forecasts of

his suffering and death, but the disciples were unable to believe that their Messiah would have to bow to such indignity. This is seen in the parallels Matt. 16:21-22(a); Mark 8:31-32; and further in Luke 18:34; 24:21. John 12:34 shows that this perplexity was shared by the common people as well as the disciples.

The Synoptists' use of various names or titles for Jesus -- Son of Man, Son of God, teacher and Lord -- also give us some clues as to their estimation of him as the Messiah. Furthermore, since these titles were accepted by Jesus, so far as we know, they also help in reaching the solution of the problem of Jesus' Messianic consciousness. Moreover all of these have some significance in the Messianic field, whether they were used by Jesus or by his followers.

The phrase, "Son of Man" was always spoken by Jesus, and never used independently by the disciples in referring to Jesus. For this reason alone it is certain that the title is authentic, since if the disciples had ascribed it to Jesus without his sanction they would not have confined it to such use. In both Mark and Q the phrase appears in discussions of the Parousia; in Mark alone it is connected with the Passion. This connection of Son of Man with the

Parousia in the earliest stratum of the gospels is significant in that it indicates the meaning Jesus placed on the title. In Daniel and Enoch the Son of Man comes from heaven, and in the sayings of Jesus he also comes from heaven. From this similarity one draws a justified conclusion that Jesus expected the Son of Man to usher in the day of judgment before the new era, as he does in Enoch.

Granting that deduction, we are faced with the question of the identity of the Son of Man, for Jesus always used the phrase in the third person. This fact has been pointed to as proof that he did not believe he himself was the Son of Man, but it would seem more probable that this was his method of cloaking Messianic prophecies so as not to disclose his identity as the Messiah. The disciples understood that Jesus was the Son of Man, so the predictions of the Parousia would be clear to them as prophecies of Jesus' return after death; but as we know, they did not see the full import of his words until after the resurrection experiences.

The identification of Jesus with the Servant of Old Testament prophecies was accomplished, not so much through a definite title as through reference to his alleged fulfillment of those prophecies. In neither Mark nor Q is

there a clear identification of Jesus with the Suffering Servant, unless Mark's story of Jesus' dying cry on the cross be taken as such. This is a highly questionable conclusion. What is more probable is that Matthew saw in that cry a fulfillment of Psalm 22, and from that point proceeded to couple the events of Jesus' life with the Servant prophecies. However, in no place are these prophecies looked on by the writers as prophetic of the suffering and death of Jesus. Matt. 8:17 quotes Isaiah 53:4, but not with any idea of the coming Passion in mind; similarly, Matt. 12:17 Jesus is identified with the Servant, but again with no reference to his suffering.

These facts indicate that the identification of Jesus with the Suffering Servant of Israel belongs to a later date, and since this identification is present in Acts, one might conclude that it originated among Hellenistic Christians. Certainly, however, the first disciples did not see the Suffering Servant in Jesus, nor did Jesus himself believe the parallel existed.

To the Jew of the first century another title for Jesus, Son of God, might mean various things: one of the angels, possibly a king, sometimes Israel, often a special angel and hence more often the Messiah. The phrase is found

in Q only once (Matt. 11:25-27; Luke 10:21-22) and the liturgical character of this section, together with its dissimilarity with anything else in Q indicates an origin later than Q. In Mark the title occurs six times: twice spoken by demoniacs; twice by the voice from heaven; once by the high priest, and once by the centurion at the cross. It is never used by the disciples themselves, and never by Jesus; the high priest almost certainly used it because it would appear most dangerous in Roman eyes through its popular connection with the political Davidic Messiah; the centurion probably used it thoughtlessly and the demoniacs certainly lacked an understanding of it. We are therefore confined to its use by the voice from heaven in the study of its connotation.

The voice first spoke at Jesus' baptism (Mark 1:11; Matt. 3:17; Luke 3:22), and constituted a revelation to him of his mission in life. The second and last occurrence was at the transfiguration (Mark 9:7; Matt. 17:5; Luke 9:35) when the voice spoke to the disciples about Jesus, revealing him to them. There is no doubt that Matthew and Luke particularly saw in these revelations proof of the unique Sonship of Jesus, not only spiritually but physically also. In the Fourth Gospel this category becomes more spiritual and metaphysical, less connected with the human birth of Jesus.

The use of the title, however, shows a belief in the Messianic nature of Jesus, since it would convey that idea in the minds of his followers.

The term "Lord" as used of Jesus was originally the Aramaic "Maran", a word commonly used as an expression of honour. The Greek equivalent, "kurios", had more extensive connotations, and when it supplanted the Aramaic, these wider meanings were kept. In the oldest gospel strata, however, "kurios" takes a definitely secondary place to the Jewish title, "Rabbi", represented in the Greek by either a direct transliteration or by "didaskalos". It would appear, therefore, that Jesus was most commonly referred to as "rabbi", especially in Jerusalem and Galilee in general, but that, as Christianity spread into other districts, the Aramaic "Maran" was used, which became translated into "Kurios" under Hellenistic influence. With this change in titles there came a change in meaning, for while "rabbi" is purely humanistic, "maran" could well carry Messianic significance, and "kurios" was by that time completely coupled with religion, and would imply divinity in the personality of Jesus. This shows a steadily increasing recognition of Jesus as the Messiah who had the power to raise men to divine levels if they had faith.

Luke uses a unique method of pointing out the Messianic

nature of Jesus in the first two chapters of his gospel. In this introduction to his story of the life of Jesus Luke puts into the mouths of various persons songs which serve to tell the reader that the coming births of John the Baptist and Jesus are highly important events, both to man and God. These songs are definitely Messianic in tone, with the result that anyone reading this gospel would realize that a divine plan was being executed. Thus Zachariah is told by Gabriel that Elizabeth, his wife, will give birth to a second Elijah (1:13-17). Six months later Mary is informed by the same angel that she is to bear a son to whom "...the Lord God shall give ... the throne of his father David," and who will be conceived of the Holy Ghost (1:30-33; 35-37) Mary's song to Elizabeth shows this idea of the divine nature of the coming birth in her declaration that "...from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." (1:48) The same Messianic tone and style of speech is present in the Benedictus (1:68-79) and the Nunc Dimittis (2:29-32). Doubts have been cast on the Magnificat and the Benedictus, notably by Westcott and Hort, but this question need not concern us here since the remaining unchallenged poems serve to illustrate Luke's desire to build up in his reader's mind the expectation of miraculous and divine events.(1)

(1) see further S.J. Case (Ed), Studies in Early Christianity, pp.285 ff.

In all the above mentioned ways the gospel writers pointed up the Messianic nature and mission of Jesus, drawing a picture of him as the prophesied agent of God, deliverer of Israel and Saviour of mankind. The question now arises: How much, if any, of this picture of Jesus as the Messiah was drawn by Jesus himself?

There seems to be no doubt that Jesus did believe himself to be the Messiah, unless we are to discount every eschatological passage in the gospels as non-authentic; but for this we would have no good basis. Jesus' ministry starts on a note of impending doom for sinners (Matt. 4:17 "Mark 1:15) which would indicate that Jesus at least believed he was in some way a special envoy of God. Again, in the Lord's prayer he makes the petition, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." This shows his expectation of the Kingdom as a state of high morality, where God's will goes unchallenged. The next problem is the question of what part Jesus expected to play in the advent of the Kingdom. Some scholars have said that Jesus expected to become the Messiah after death, and yet he replied to the High Priest at his trial with the words, "I am ((the Christ, the Son of the Blessed.))" (Mark 14: 61-62). Matthew's version is not in the same words (26:64) but is equally impossible to explain satisfactorily as any-

thing but a claim of Messiahship. The fact that he took no exception to the superscription mounted on his cross is also of some value in the question. Earlier in his career, when Peter acclaimed him as the Messiah, Jesus accepted the title but demanded secrecy. In the face of such evidence it is virtually impossible to say that Jesus did not look on himself as the Messiah.

Apart entirely from this evidence, there are also features in the teachings of Jesus which have a definitely eschatological tone. Jesus himself told the disciples they were fortunate in witnessing his actions and life in general (Matt. 13:16 " Luke 10:23) which indicates a belief that his was no ordinary life. He speaks often of the mutual dislike and even hatred between relatives his Kingdom will cause, which was an accepted feature of the older Messianic writings (Matt. 10:34-35" Luke 12:51-43). Jesus reception in his own home (Mark 3:21,31ff; Matt. 12:46ff; Luke 8:19ff; John 7:5) illustrated the family schisms he had prophesied. The same is true of his countrymen, who looked on Jesus as the son of a carpenter and nothing more (Mark 6:16; Matt. 13:53-58; Luke 4:16-30). One might also say that Jesus exemplified the separation of people in the Messianic age when he called an unwilling person to follow him (Luke 9:60f) yet in other situations said that not all the willing ones

would be allowed to follow him (Matt. 7:22f).

The traditional Messianic feast also makes its appearance. Jesus considered that those who were first invited are now refused because of their disbelief, and so concentrated on publicans, the poor and the Gentiles. These features are seen in Matt. 8:11ff " Luke 13:28ff; Matt. 8:10 " Luke 7:9; Matt. 21:31 (cf. Luke 7:29); Matt. 22:1-14 (cf. Luke 14:16-24).

Further Jesus' obvious belief in a new attitude to the Law of Moses could possibly arise from the idea that he and his disciples belonged to a new era, and hence were above the laws of fasting, sabbath observance and so on.

It is also worth noting that when Jesus was asked by disciples of John the Baptist if he was the Messiah, Jesus told them to look at the wonders he had performed and draw their own (obviously affirmative) conclusion (Matt. 11:3ff " Luke 7:19ff).

There is no doubt that Jesus claimed a close relationship to God such as would befit the Messiah. In Luke 4:17-21 he stated that the fulfillment of prophecy was in himself, thus implying that he had been divinely appointed. He spoke and taught in such a way as to impress his hearers with more

than usual authority; he made claims for service from his followers with the terms "for my sake" or "for my name's sake" and increased such claims after Peter's annunciation of him as the Messiah. This demanding attitude increased steadily until, in the words of C. J. Cadoux, "The general tone ... of the incidents that followed upon the Triumphal Entry ... suggests continuous tension between Jesus and the religious leaders on the question of his status and authority." (1) The tension reached its climax at the trial when the High Priest asked Jesus if he was the Son of God and received the affirmative answer which became the evidence of Jesus' conviction as a blasphemer.

If, then, Jesus thought he was the Messiah, what connotation did he attach to the title, and what sort of Messianic era did he expect to inaugurate? It is fairly obvious that he held no brief for Jewish hopes of deliverance from Rome, since he took no exception to the payment of taxes to Rome. It is true that to a certain extent he was nationalistic, going to totally non-Jewish territory only once (Mark 7:24-31 " Matt. 15:21-29). Apart from that, however, his ethical precepts were distinctly international even to the point of including the long-hated Samaritans.

(1) C. J. Cadoux, The Historic Mission of Jesus, p: 59.

Possibly his hope was that the Jews would be the means of bringing the Gentiles to the Kingdom of God.

This hope would involve nothing of a political, and therefore, dangerous nature. Even in Jesus' definitely objective teachings the Kingdom of God was beyond the realm of politics and race. He almost certainly expected the imminent advent of the Kingdom of Heaven, saying that many of his own generation would witness it (Luke 9:27); there would be no warning of its approach and the wise man would be eternally prepared.

Such, to use Dobschutz's phrasing, (1) is his "distinct eschatology" as contrasted with his "transmuted eschatology". The latter, however, would appear to be the more basic in the teachings of Jesus -- the concept of the Kingdom as an experience in the hearts of men and not a cataclysmic overthrowing of the world's temporal powers at the hand of God.

An example of this idea of the Kingdom as an attitude of mind, and therefore already present, is seen in the casting out of devils in Mark 3:24-27. Here Jesus argues that the Kingdom cannot last unless its opponents are put out of power. Also, in Luke 11:19,20; Matt. 12:27-28 he states

(1) E. von Dobschutz, The Eschatology of the Gospels - Lecture III.

that since he is casting out devils through the power of God vested in him then the Kingdom is already present. Again in Luke 17:20-21 Jesus answered questions as to when the Kingdom would come by saying that it was already present. Matt. 11:12-13; Luke 16:16 give another example of this attitude, though not with equal clarity. Apart from all possible questions as to origin and interpretation, however, it seems certain that here Jesus marked two divisions in time: that up until John the Baptist, and that after him. There is no third Messianic era included, which indicates that Jesus thought of that era as already existent but not recognized.

Jesus apparently placed the material side of the Kingdom in a subservient position to that of the spiritual: in other words, his transmuted or realized eschatology was more important than his distinct eschatology. This is indicated in the parallels Matt. 9:6-8 " Mark 2:10-12 " Luke 5:24-26 where Jesus heals the man with palsy in order to show that the Son of Man can forgive sins. Both healing and forgiveness were to be features of the Kingdom, but here Jesus shows explicitly which is the major feature.

It has been stated, notably by Schweitzer, that Jesus' eschatology is the sole motive for his ethics: that men are

to live according to his code of conduct in order to gain salvation in the face of a swiftly approaching new era. It is true that the Kingdom is used by Jesus in many places as a sanction for obedience to his laws. He spoke of the Last Judgment, of the perils of Gehenna, of the difficulty of entering into the Kingdom of Heaven, and of the necessity for preparedness. Nevertheless we more often find him appealing to the rationality of his listeners, to the sanctity of the Scriptures, and especially to the nature of God. Eschatology may be the dominant sanction, but the essential sanction is the nature of God.

"The essential sanction represents an appeal simply to the reason and discernment, to the God-conscious moral nature of men, assisted by the witness of Scripture and the example and authority of Jesus."(1)

This argument that Jesus taught an "interim ethic" is further confuted by the fact that there is a mass of his ethical teachings totally unconnected with any eschatological matter. To pour all such teachings into the common mould is to change their appearance beyond all recognition. Jesus' gospel of humility, universal love, trust in God, returning evil for good and so on have no connection with the idea of a coming judgment day and lose their value, their prophetic

(1) A. N. Wilder, Eschatology and Ethics in the Teaching of Jesus, p. 154.

insight, and their moral character when thrust forcibly into association with, much less dependence on, eschatological prediction.

From the preceding pages comes a picture of Jesus as believing himself to be the Messiah, but having instead of political ambitions, the mission of teaching such a way of living with God and one's fellowman as would bring the will of God into actuality in the world and hence inaugurate the Kingdom of God. He may have expected the present world to come to an end soon, but if he did, it is still questionable whether he was mistaken. We are still working slowly towards the goal of the world he envisaged, and in that sense, the older world is gradually ending, being replaced, though very slowly, by a more and more perfect world which will eventually be what Jesus referred to as the Kingdom of Heaven, and in which he will be recognized as king.

As has already been noted, our narratives of the nature and mission of Jesus have been coloured, first by Paul, then by the Synoptists. The Fourth Gospel is important chiefly for its furtherance of the Hellenization of Christianity. In this gospel Jesus is explained to the Greek readers as the Logos, pre-existent and divine, having the same nature with God. Considerable attention is paid to John the Baptist with

the intention of proving beyond doubt that he was merely the forerunner of Jesus, not the real Messiah. John acclaims Jesus as the "Lamb of God" who has come to bring salvation to the world. Jesus is made equal to God, if not a part of the Godhead, and his mission on earth is a self-accented lowering of himself to human status in order to bring mankind up to the divine level through his death and resurrection. Such is the Messianic nature of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel -- a nature acceptable to Greeks as a way of salvation, and quite free from the Jewish apocalyptic hope.

Chapter VII

MESSIANISM IN THE PATRISTIC AGE

There was one feature common to all Messianic writings in this period, namely, that Jesus was accepted as the Messiah, usually with pronounced eschatological significance. The hope of his speedy return was still prevalent, and the intermittent Roman persecutions of Christians served to strengthen that faith. The Revelation of St. John the Divine was written in the reign of Domitian (81-96 A.D.) to strengthen Christians during the persecutions of that ruler, and gives a typical example of the popular reaction to an unsympathetic government.

Revelation which arose out of persecution, was written by an apparently persecuted Christian for his brother Christians. By this time the practice of emperor worship, started by the provinces out of gratitude for continued peace under Roman rule, had become required of all people living in the Roman empire except the Jews. It was well known that Christians, members of an illegal religion, would take no part in such sacrilegious practices, and the natural result was sporadic but severe persecution in which John was involved. Going to the island of Patmos, either voluntarily or forcibly, he experienced an ecstatic vision, in which there was revealed to him God's plan for world's salvation.

Revelation embodies this vision, and in it the writer pictures Jesus in the form of a lamb revealing God's plan in heaven, and his acclamation as ruler of the earth. The scene then changes to the earth, where a succession of disasters is brought to a climax by the complete destruction of Rome. The final act of this tremendous drama shows the establishment of the New Jerusalem under the rule of God and Christ. In this way Jesus is made the immortal co-worker with God, destined to rule the earth, and Christian readers of this apocalypse were reminded that even the Roman rulers were subordinate to God, and would eventually be replaced with Christ. There is no doubt that John expected that this new world would appear in the very near future: in two places he says explicitly, "... the time is at hand", (1:3; 22:10). Further, he says that the present emperor will be followed by another who will reign for a very brief period, after which Nero will return to set up his kingdom. This last government, however, will last only three and one-half years, and will be followed by the millennial kingdom, which will come into being after preliminary wars, destruction of Rome and punishment of the wicked. This one New Testament reference to the millenium (Rev. 20:3) it might be noted, provides the basis for all later millennial views, which is a rather slight foundation on which to build a faith. As the

years of the millenium in Revelation are drawing to their close, Satan will be released for a final attack on the righteous but will be defeated in the attempt. The new Jerusalem will then descend from heaven and the righteous will live in it for eternity, enjoying the reward of their faithfulness. Again it should be noted that all this was to come to pass in the near future, and cannot be applied to any later date.

At about this time Christian groups were splitting up over the Docetist controversy. Docetists held that since Jesus was the Messiah and the Son of God, he could not have actually been human and have suffered physical agony on the Cross. They therefore decided that his sufferings were only apparent and not actual, and that he himself was not really possessed of a physical body. These views were expressed considerably later in the Acts of John (ca. 160) and the Gospel of Peter (ca. 135).

For the purpose of denouncing this sect the three epistles of John "the Elder" were written. The Elder warns Christians against those who do not acknowledge the coming of Jesus in human form, declaring them to be agents of the Antichrist. This dominant theme runs through all three of his letters and shows the serious nature of the controversy.

To orthodox Christians the fact that the Messiah had assumed human form, and had accepted a human death for them was all-important. Hence the Docetic theory that it was an illusory life and death which Christ had experienced was prime heresy.

Docetism gave rise all too often to an immoral dualism. In the early years of the second century there were many so-called Christians who relied on the mercy of God to forgive all sins, denied the atonement theory of the death of Jesus, and led lascivious lives. The Epistle of Jude (ca. 125) was written to remind Christians of the necessity of faith, not only in God, but also in Christ, and of the danger of ignoring Jesus. A generation later this short epistle was incorporated into II Peter. A whole century had passed since the death of Jesus, and Christians were beginning to doubt his return. This epistle was written to declare the certainty of the Second Coming of Christ. This will take place without warning (3:10) and will be accompanied by the destruction of the earth through fire, to be followed by the establishment of a new heaven and earth to be occupied by the righteous. In II Peter a fading eschatological hope is brought back in its original vigour and taught as an essential feature of the Christian religion.

It should not be assumed, however, that the writing of

II Peter shows a widespread indifference to eschatological hopes, for such was not the case. In the first decade of the second century a handbook was being circulated among Christians in Syria which closed with the words "... for you know not the hour in which our Lord cometh." (Didache, Ch. 16) This warning is accompanied by a definitely planned prophecy of the last days. Moreover, many of the leaders of the church were numbered among the eschatologists of their days, and it is from their writings that we get our knowledge of the speculations being circulated in the early Christian church.

In the first half of the same century Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna both expressed belief that they were living in the last days of this era. The unknown writer of Barnabus foretold that the millenium would start six thousand years after the Creation, inaugurated by the return of Christ. Following that era a second transformation would occur starting a new world. Papias, of Hierapolis, drew from Jewish imagery his conception of the Messianic kingdom, when he pictured it as one typified by miraculous abundance in nature and peace between wild animals.

Some time in the middle of the second century Hermas wrote "The Shepherd" in which he speaks of Christ in the same terms used for God, showing his belief that Christ was divine.

He looked on Jesus as the pre-existent Spirit who created the universe and became flesh according to God's will in order to effect human salvation. Here we see a typical example of the increasing exaltation of the person of Jesus from that of a man to a rank functionally equal to God.

Apocalyptic speculation continued to attract some attention as the Roman Empire declined. Justin (ca. 160 A.D.) said that Christ's coming had been delayed in order to give more people time to repent. There will certainly be a return, however, but it will be preceded by the appearance of the Antichrist. With the coming of Jesus the wicked will be judged, the righteous dead will arise, the world will be destroyed by fire, but Jerusalem will be restored to serve as the home of the faithful and capital of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth for one thousand years.

Irenaeus, a few years later, produced a somewhat different plan for the last days. He believed that the present world would last six thousand years, at the end of which time there would be an increase in suffering, then the Antichrist would come to rule in Jerusalem for three and one-half years. He would then be conquered by Christ and the righteous would rise from their graves to live in a highly fruitful earth. Following that era the final judgment would take place and

the new heaven and new earth would be set up to last for eternity.

With the turn of the century Tertullian came into prominence with a definite eschatological program directed against doubters. He believed that the decay of the Roman Empire would precede the appearance of the Antichrist, after which Christ would return to bring about the resurrection of the righteous to live in the new kingdom in Jerusalem for one thousand years and then to go to heaven for eternity while the earth would be destroyed by fire.

During the early years of this third century eschatology met its severest critic of Christian times, in the person of Origen. He treated millennial imagery in the Bible figuratively, giving it an allegorical interpretation which rendered its aims spiritual rather than physical or material. He expressed the belief that through a period of time the imperfect would gradually be made perfect, but took no part in eschatological predictions of any sort.

Origen's was a lonely voice, however, for at the same time Hippolytus was foretelling in Rome the end of this era not only six thousand years after the Creation, but also five hundred years after the birth of Jesus. In these early

years when the Christian church was being oppressed Christians saw little hope for a better world except by divine intervention and those who were not content to live as best they could under the circumstances, clung tenaciously to whatever hope was held out to them of future deliverance.

About fifty years later Commodian rose to some prominence in North Africa with another eschatological scheme involving two Antichrists: first Nero would reign for three and one-half years, then yield to a Persian ruler who would himself be conquered by the returned Christ. The establishment of Christ's kingdom would be accompanied by the resurrection of the saints to live for one thousand years in a world of abundance centered in Jerusalem. At the end of this millenium would come the final judgment of the wicked.

From the North African scene came Lactantius (310 A.D.), the first eschatologist of the fourth century. Since the creation took six days and man was created on the sixth, he decided that this world would last six thousand years, and the creation of the new man (Christians) was the sign of the inauguration of the new world. At the outset of this new kingdom there would be dire distress, increasing wickedness, general wars and the destruction of the Roman Empire. The Son of God would then descend to rule over the resurrected saints for ten thousand years. This would be followed by the final judgment of all people -- the wicked to suffer

eternal punishment witnessed by the happy righteous.

Methodius, bishop of Olympus in Lycia, in the first quarter of the fourth century, believed in a simpler and somewhat more vague eschatology than that held by his African contemporary. He taught that the day of judgment and first resurrection would be followed by a thousand years under Christ, after which the material bodies of the righteous would be transformed and they would be transported to some heavenly region to live with God.

During this same century, however, great changes were taking place in Christendom which were to affect millenarianism for centuries to come. Christianity was making rapid progress and eventually became the legal religion of the Roman Empire. The natural result was a cessation of persecution of Christians and a more favorable attitude on the part of Christians towards the Empire. No longer was the destruction of Rome looked forward to with high hopes as a prerequisite to the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth; the future looked reasonably bright in the field of Christian faith and there was no strong desire for divine intervention into human affairs. Eschatological predictions became unpopular and interest centered in temporal conditions rather than on what might happen at some unknown date in the

future. Typical of this new attitude was Augustine's treatise, City of God, written after the fall of Rome in 410 A.D. In this work Augustine states that the long-awaited new era began with the earthly life of Jesus, and that the Christian church is the City of God on earth. This meant that the millenium was already in existence, and working from this point of view, Augustine so effectively laid the task of making the City of God Worthy of God on the shoulders of the Christians that millenarian speculation was silenced for centuries.

Chapter VIII

MEDIEVAL AND MODERN TIMES

For three hundred years after Augustine no eschatologist attained any prominence. Ecclesiasts directed their energies chiefly to the acquisition of temporal power as a means of bringing about the rule of God on earth. The kings became regarded as vice-regents under God, but took guidance from the religious leaders. An example of this conception of monarchy may be seen in a letter from Pope Gelasius I (494 A.D.) to the Eastern Emperor Anastasius in which he points out to the emperor that "... as a pious man you yield your neck to the administrators of divine things." (1) This relationship between the spiritual and temporal powers lasted until the beginning of the fourteenth century, when Boniface VIII was defeated by Philip IV of France in the battle for supremacy.

A few millenialists of that period are worthy of mention. Fursa of the seventh century and Aelfric, an English abbot of the eleventh century, kept eschatological hopes high in their immediate circles; but not until the middle of the twelfth century was there any considerable arousing of such interest. This was incited by Joachim or Flora, who combined an

(1) J.T. McNeill, Christian Hope for World Society, p. 32.

allegorical interpretation of the past with a prophetic outlook on the future. In 1254 Gerard of Gorgo San Donnino published an edition of Joachim's prophecies in which 1260 was set as the date for the inauguration of the new world, corresponding to the number of days the woman mentioned in Rev. 12:1-6 stayed in the wilderness. Joachim divided human history into three stages: the age of the Father (the era of the patriarchs and obedience to the Law); that of the Son (from the time of John the Baptist, marked by the quality of wisdom); that of the Spirit which was to commence according to Gerard's edition, in 1260. When the new era arrived the present church would be purified, the elect of all nations would be gathered for a final conflict with the powers of evil, to be followed by the judgment and the new world.

Shortly after Joachim's death Francis of Assisi came into prominence, to be acclaimed by many of his followers as the Messiah of the new era. After his death these followers split into two parties, the Spiritualists concentrating on the apocalyptic hope. Taking as their center of interest the prophecies of Joachim, they revised them continually to produce new dates for the coming of the new world. As preference dictated, either Pope Boniface VIII or King Philip IV was looked on as the Antichrist, and

their expectations were so intense as to become deep convictions, gradually becoming linked with some definite political plan. The best known case of this latter development was that of Cola di Rienzo, a Roman of the fourteenth century who tried to lead a general revolution to be followed by the renovation of humanity, but without prolonged success. That he was able to achieve any success whatever shows the general feeling that the end of this present world was near, a feeling that was brought to its height by the loss of ecclesiastical authority through Philip IV's defeat of Boniface VIII, which loss marked the end of an era of church power and could well mean, in the minds of the common people, the end of the temporal world. The eschatological hopes of the people from this time on were kept high by the prevailing unrest which reached its climax later in the Protestant Reformation.

Particularly in Bohemia were such reelings common. In the latter part of the fourteenth century Miltitz of Kromeriz, a forerunner of John Huss, revolted from the corruption of the times, and found in the Scriptures convincing proof that the Antichrist was active in his world. From his studies he decided that the end of the world was to occur some time between 1365 and 1367. Huss himself did not lay particular stress on the coming end of the world, but often spoke of the

Antichrist as a present evil power waiting to capture the faithful. During the Hussite wars following the violent death of Huss the Bohemian people saw in their own country ample reason to believe that the world was approaching its end.

Such theories were bolstered at this time by the Taborite movement, whose leaders painted in glowing colours a picture of the imminent judgment day. They pointed to the signs of the times -- war and rumours of wars, false prophets and traitors within their own movement -- as proofs of the rapidly approaching end. So convinced of the impending doom were the Taborites that they chose five cities of Bohemia which had not yielded to the Antichrist as cities of refuge against the day of world destruction, and to those cities the people flocked, selling their property and turning the proceeds over to their leaders. The restoration of peace naturally caused a decline in that group's following, but similar hopes were preserved in the milder sect called the Bohemian Brethren. The pope was pointed to as the Antichrist and the imminence of the second coming was stressed, particularly during the period of turmoil in the Thirty Years' War.

As might be expected, the reformers in Switzerland and

Germany also looked on the Roman church as an evil power. Early in the sixteenth century such feelings reached their climax among the fanatical members of the Anabaptist group. Accompanying the revolt against the feudal system ending in the Peasants' War of 1525, Melchior Hoffman posed as one of the two witnesses mentioned in Rev. 11:3 and announced that Strassburg was to be the New Jerusalem. Owing to opposition he and his followers moved to Munster, taking possession of the civic government, and waited for the return of Christ. There they held complete power until 1535, when the movement was forcibly suppressed.

Apart from such extremists, however, the eschatology of the Reformed churches was usually considerably restrained. Undoubtedly the Roman hierarchy was regarded as the Antichrist and the approaching end of the world was often anticipated, but the belief in a literal millennial reign of Christ was not generally accepted by the leaders of the various Protestant churches.

Unfortunately the common people did not always follow the examples of their leaders. Millennial teachings still found many supporters, particularly in the seventeenth century. Human affairs were in a turmoil, with religious wars in Germany, religious persecution in France and political revolution in England under Cromwell. As has always been the

case, such social unrest led many people to believe that it indicated the beginning of the end for the present world.

In France and Germany such views were favored by certain individuals rather than by sects. In 1627 the German scholar Alsted forecasted the beginning of the millennial era to come in 1694, while in France a generation later Protestant Jurieu set the date 1689 for the downfall of the Antichrist Roman church. In England, however, such thinking reached the stage of organization into a political movement called the Fifth Monarchy Movement, opposed to Cromwell. The professed aim of this group was to fight for Jesus, whom they believed was to come and establish a world monarchy. This conviction resulted in two vain attempts at revolt in 1657 and 1661. Members of this group were activated by hatred for the Roman church, and strong communistic and mystical tendencies. Rational scriptural study was looked on as evil, and mystical knowledge was considered the only true guide to the meaning of the Scripture.

In 1726 millenarianism in Germany reached the level of organization in the founding of the Ronsdorf sect, under Elias Eller, who claimed that he and his wife (who married him after her conversion to his faith) were the two witnesses of Rev. 11:3, and were chosen to establish the New Jerusalem.

Encouraged by the success which his movement enjoyed, he later declared himself to be the incarnation of the Godhead and his wife to be the future mother of the saviour of the world. Following Eller's death in 1750, however, the sect declined rapidly in popular support and shortly became extinct.

At about the same time Germany became the scene of aroused eschatological interest in scholastic circles, with the publication of a commentary on Revelation in 1740 by J. A. Bengel. Rejecting the allegorical and spiritual interpretations of the Book of Revelation, Bengel decided that the literal interpretation was millenarian, and deduced from it that the new world would begin in 1836.

Late in the seventeenth century England experienced renewed millennial interest under Ann Lee and the "Shaker" movement. Meeting opposition in England, she moved to America and there organized several Shaker settlements, communistic in type and celibate in organization, the men and women living in separate communities. It was believed that the last cycle of the world's history had commenced with the life of Ann Lee and would result in the establishment of the new age.

The French Revolution with its attendant tyranny, destruction and death produced the inevitable increase in

millennial speculation. The German theosophists, Schonherr, identified Napoleon with the Antichrist, his home city of Konigsberg with the city whose doom was predicted in Rev. 17:9ff, and declared that the coming of Christ was near at hand. A generation after Schonherr's death in 1826 Christoph Hoffman proposed to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem in preparation for the return of Christ, but without success.

Apart entirely from such sectarian activity, members of the Protestant churches themselves took great interest in the predictions allegedly contained in the Bible. Following Bengel's system, such interpreters of the Scripture combined their isogetical gleanings with various contemporary events in order to arrive at definite predictions of the date for the return of Christ. This practice was prevalent throughout Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and, in fact, has attracted varying numbers of followers down to the present day.

Near the end of the seventeenth century, or the early years of the eighteenth a movement was started in the Russian Ukraine which, through a chain of adverse circumstances found its home in Canada in 1899. This sect, called the Dukhobors, has its origin shrouded in mystery but it is known that various leaders in its history have claimed, and won, the title of Christ; they even established a dynasty of

Messiahs. In 1899 the Dukhobor colony was transplanted to Canada, under a previously secured guarantee of religious liberty and freedom from military service. Their leader, Peter Verigin, then imprisoned in Siberia, was granted freedom to follow the colonists to Canada in 1902, and his arrival was followed by several pilgrimages undertaken to meet Jesus, whom they believed to be on his way to rule their modern Zion. After various quarrels with the federal government over vital statistics, Peter Verigin bought a tract of land of considerable size in British Columbia and moved six thousand of his followers to this new land of promise, where they set up their own community government and lived as disconnected from the outside world as was possible, in which state they still exist.

In 1787 George Rapp, of Wittenberg, organized a movement named the Harmony Society, which also was later transferred to this continent. Six hundred followers settled in Pittsburgh in 1804 and established a communistic form of society to await the second coming of Christ. However, due to encouragement of celibacy and natural decline of interest as the years progressed, the group had disappeared by 1903.

Great Britain also experienced this apocalyptic trend of thought at that time, notably through three movements and

their offshoots. The Catholic Apostolic Church was started in 1823 by Edward Irving, a Scotch Presbyterian. Irving attracted the early support of a rich banker, Henry Drummond, at whose home yearly conferences were held. In the belief that Christ was to return to earth very soon, they instituted a form of apostolic church based on the primitive Christian church, so as to be prepared for the coming of Jesus. While the date for Christ's return was first set at 1832, the movement persisted after that date had passed and even gained a small gathering of supporters in the United States, where the first church was started in 1851. In the early years of the group a schism appeared, resulting in the establishment of the New Apostolic Church, which sect also hoped for the speedy return of Christ, and actually had much in common with the parent body.

The second main sect in Britain at this time was the Plymouth Brethren, organized in 1830. This group was also based on the early Christian ecclesiastical government, and entertained high hopes of the return of Christ, to rule them. They later divided into several denominations, and now claim a few thousand adherents.

Late in the eighteenth century Richard Brothers claimed divine authority to rule England and demanded the abdication of King George, for which claim he was promptly imprisoned,

and later confined to an asylum as a criminal lunatic. Upon his release he gathered a fair number of followers, but at the time of his death he claimed only two disciples. One of these, John Finlayson, kept his master's ideas alive, and by the time of his death in 1854 the movement was gaining popularity. From this none too admirable origin the present British-Israel sect developed and has grown to considerable size at the present time. World scholarship has, on the whole, passed it by with scant attention, as a few quotations will show.

"The Theory ... rests on premises which are deemed by scholars -- both theological and anthropological -- to be utterly unsound."(1)

"The whole movement is interesting as a 'reductio ad absurdum' of too literal interpretation of the prophecies."(2)

"In support of the theory many alleged identifications in respect to custom, traditions, beliefs, etc., have been adduced. These without exception depend upon very inadequate support."(3)

The British-Israelite theory is that the Anglo-Saxon peoples are the descendants of the "lost" ten tribes of

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- (1) Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. II, p. 31 (Eleventh Edition) (under "Anglo-Israelite Theory).
 - (2) Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. I, p. 601.
 - (3) Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. I, p. 482, (under "Anglo-Israelism").

Israel, and are destined by divine will to rule the world for all time. The truth of the matter is, of course, that the ten tribes were not lost for the simple reason that the large majority of them never left their native land. The Assyrian records of that date (722 B.C.) claim the deportation of only some twenty-seven thousands which would not appear to be more than a small part of the inhabitants of Samaria. If this was the case, and we have no reason to suppose otherwise, then there is no basis for believing that the ten tribes migrated to the British Isles, there to await the fulfillment of their destiny as the leaders of the world. For a more complete discussion of the defects in British-Israelitish reasoning the reader is referred to the works of N. H. Parker and S. H. Wilkinson which are listed in the bibliography. To pursue the study of this movement intensively in this work would be to grant it more space than it merits. The beliefs of its followers are based on highly fanciful interpretations of the Scripture, so unjustified and irrational as to repel the interest of any unbiased investigator. There is the further fault of its philosophy, which holds the totally anti-Christian idea that any one race is favored by God and is therefore destined to hold the balance of power in the world.

It is obvious that no follower of this movement can

accept the belief that the Kingdom of God is a spiritual realm, or that Christ is ever to rule over it. Their belief is that the throne of David was destined to be the seat of judgment forever, and therefore they have decided that when the Davidic dynasty was conquered in Israel it immediately was transferred to Britain, or what is now Britain. The Kingdom of God is, then, a purely political kingdom, has no connection with the definitely spiritual kingdom referred to by Christ, and is to be found under the British throne. Such teaching is naturally abhorrent to the sincere and rational Christian, but has attracted much support and now publishes large quantities of proselytic literature, emanating from London.

Early in the eighteenth century the United States was experiencing increased interest in millenarianism. In 1830, according to the Mormon tradition, Joseph Smith started The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints. Smith felt that he was called upon to found a new community where Christ would set up his millennial kingdom when he returned to this earth. Having definite mystical tendencies, he produced the Book of Mormon, professedly revealing the word of God as it had been given to the ancient inhabitants of America. After some misfortune the Mormons found a permanent home in Salt Lake City, but have carried their beliefs far beyond that

district, and their followers still expect the return of Christ to rule them.

In 1831, a year after the origin of the Mormon church, William Miller founded the Adventist movement in New York state. From his study of the Bible Miller had decided that Christ was to return to establish the millennial age in 1843, which date was subsequently postponed to 1844. After this later date had passed uneventfully, more caution was used in fixing successive times for the advent of Christ. The group split into seven divisions in 1845, but faith in the early advent of Christ is still alive, and the groups carry on an extensive missionary campaign.

Millenarians are still to be found within the ranks of almost all denominations of the Christian church. There was a definite movement organized in 1878, starting with a conference in New York, attended by members of ten different Protestant churches. These self-styled "Evangelists" professed to interpret the Bible correctly in the light of present day conditions and events, and from their studies they concluded that the present world was working towards a speedy end, to be replaced by the millennial kingdom. The World War of 1914-1918 bolstered their hopes of a new era, but interest waned with the peace in 1918.

Late in the nineteenth century the International Bible

Students Association was organized by C. T. Russell. This evangelist gained immense support following his widespread campaigns and insistently repeated prophecies of the end of this world at various dates. Accompanying this tragedy would be the downfall of the forces of evil, namely, all governments and all churches other than his own, at which time the elect (his followers) would take power and govern the millennial kingdom. The outbreak of the World War in this case also undoubtedly caused many people to think that his prophecies were to be fulfilled, but although support declined somewhat after the end of the war, the movement was able carried on after Russell's death, by J. F. Rutherford.

Ancient hopes die hard, however, and the present world war has produced renewed speculation. This increasing interest began in the years of the depression, when the tragedy of widespread unemployment was regarded as a sign of approaching doom. As the years went on and small or large localized wars occurred in various parts of the world, apocalyptists were convinced that these were preliminary to the final, world-wide conflict which would usher in the millennial kingdom. In 1931, at the height of the depression, the Russellites, taking advantage of popular bewilderment and frustration, silently changed their organizational name to "Jehovah's Witnesses" and through contorted exegesis of the Scripture again found proof, to their own satisfaction, that

all religions of the present day are opposed to the will of God and that they alone have the truth. According to their literature, which is very extensive, Satan and his followers were cast out of heaven in 1914, at which time God enthroned Christ as king and the government of the new world began. Because Satan is accordingly holding sway on earth after his fall from heaven, we are told that we can expect no improvement in world conditions until after the coming battle of Armageddon, when the faithful prophets and patriarchs will be raised from the grave at Christ's command and will rule as princes under the sovereignty of Christ, in a world completely free from sin of any sort, and enjoying the blessings of extreme prosperity. At this time there will be a complete resurrection, and those who pass successfully through the testing time of Satan's temporary release from bondage will enjoy everlasting life in the new world, while the sinful will receive eternal punishment along with Satan.

The Jehovah's Witnesses should properly be termed post-millennialists, since they believe that the kingdom is with us now, that the second advent has already occurred, but is not apparent because of human blindness. This, of course, is the keystone of their theory, for to them anyone who disagrees with them is promptly condemned as too blind to see the light, and therefore all opposition is automatically based on such profound ignorance as to make it not worth

notice.

With this grandiose and detailed plan for the consummation of God's will the Jehovah's Witnesses have attracted a considerable number of followers, and much unfavorable attention. They owe allegiance to no one save God, are unalterably opposed to organized religious bodies, and possess a fanatical belief in their own election to rule the future world that makes rational discussion of their doctrines impossible. They are, however, merely the present outward form of a hope that has been in existence for countless centuries, and will in all probability endure the same fate of ultimate extinction which has been the lot of their predecessors.

Chapter IX

A CRITICAL STUDY OF MODERN MILLENIAL THEORIES

The preceding chapters have shown the history of the various forms of millennialism in Jewish and Christian thought, their ancient origin and recurrent popularity down to the present day. Particularly in times of turmoil and war, men have looked on conditions around them, realized the sinfulness present in the world, and have directed their thoughts towards a visionary future world of happiness and righteousness. Sometimes this vision has led them to work constructively for a better social life, but often it has evolved into a defeatist attitude based on fantastic interpretations of Scriptural prophecies.

As has already been demonstrated in a previous chapter, there is no prophecy in the Old Testament applicable to Jesus in his earthly life, much less in a returned life. Each and every writer in the Bible was concerned with conditions in his own day, and wrote either to remedy prevailing wrongs, or to strengthen the faith of his countrymen in time of trouble. One can easily imagine, therefore, how astounded Isaiah would have been had he been informed that his prophecy of a highway for the returning exiles would later be construed as a reference to the modern railway from Joppa to Jerusalem, which construction has been placed on that verse by modern

millennialists. Similar treatment is given countless other passages of both Old and New Testaments.

The book of Revelation, in particular, is abused by such so-called scholars. Ignoring completely the author's obvious concern for the welfare of his fellow Christians in a time of persecution, they contort his prophecies into references to modern events and equate the number 666 with Mohammed, the pope, or any person regarded by them as an unequalled incarnation of evil. The fact that time and again their confident forecasts of the end of the world have been disproven by the brutal facts of history deters them not in the least. As each date for the end of the world has passed quietly on its way a few disillusioned disciples have deserted their respective leaders, but the memory of the credulous is short, and some later time finds a new movement rising in strength and popularity, based on the inspiring hope that this time the predictions will come true.

This form of human gullibility was shown during the first world war, when large numbers of people became convinced that they were living on the threshold of the new world. The war ended, the world entered into a period of prosperity, which, though short-lived, discouraged belief in the approaching millenium, and men turned their attentions to this present world, and the work which had to be done in it.

Later, as social conditions took a sharp decline ending in the economic depression of 1929-39, men again began to wonder if the resultant widespread poverty and misery did not precede the return of Christ and the inauguration of his kingdom. Such surmises crystallized into definite beliefs as the countries of the world again plunged into what was to be the most catastrophic war in history. Here the pre-millennialists stepped in to declare that this war was foretold in the Scripture as a prelude to the millennial kingdom.

Exemplifying this theory, the Jehovah's Witnesses of Canada see in the eleventh chapter of Daniel a prophecy of present day conditions, through the purely arbitrary equating on the "king of the north" with the totalitarian powers, and the "king of the south" with the democratic United Nations. From this point they go on to declare that this prophecy proves the world is in its last stages and its end will include the destruction of all totalitarian rule, from Satan and his demons on down to men, including the pope and the whole Roman church, if not all churches. It is obvious that this interpretation of Daniel has no basis whatsoever, and since that example is typical of the group's allegorizations, it is likewise obvious that the sect's whole basis of faith is unsound.

Added to this fault in premillennialism, there is the further defect of its philosophy. Any adherent of this sect

accepts as a primary doctrine, whether explicit or implicit, the ultimate uselessness of human intelligence. According to them it is futile to try to improve this present world because God has already decreed that the world shall become steadily worse until He steps in, either directly or through His envoy, to establish forcibly a divine kingdom. If this contention be true, then the teachings and sacrifices of Old Testament prophets, of Jesus himself, and of all idealists throughout the history of mankind, have been for naught, because it is the predestined fate of the world to follow evil.

If, then, such applications of Biblical prophecies are wrong, what estimate of value should be placed on such writings? To find our answer we must look back into the conditions under which the books were written. At several times in the history of the Jewish race, the future looked very dismal. Religious faith suffered under the threat of persecution, or under the influence of the grandeur of pagan religions. In such times some prophet has recognized this threat to the ancient faith and has written, either in the form of fiction or prophecy, to strengthen the people in their time of trial. Since apocalypticism was the most efficient vehicle of courage or hope, and since it was generally accepted to some degree in ancient days, these writings usually took a definitely messianic trend. Thus,

in the time of the Babylonian exile, the exiles were assured that a remnant of the people would return to a glorified and sanctified Jerusalem. Later, while suffering under the fanatical Antiochus, the writer of Daniel promised his readers that a better time was ahead, when the powers of evil would be crushed and the righteous would reign in divine glory. Again, after the shocking death of Jesus, Christians were told, through the disciples and various writers, that their Lord would return to set up a godly kingdom and rule over them for all eternity. When the Roman government saw in that Christian faith a potential threat to its power and began to persecute it, the writer of Revelation inspired and strengthened the Christians with a renewed hope.

It should be clearly seen from such facts that the apocalyptic and prophetic writings of the Bible were intended as a source of strength in troublous times. The writers had enough to cause them concern in their own days without looking ahead to see what was going to happen one or two thousand years in the future. To believe that any prophecies of the Bible are to be fulfilled literally in this age is to indulge in a gross and entirely unwarranted conceit as to the value, in the eyes of God, of this generation over and above all the countless preceding generations in the history of man.

Apocalyptic hopes have been invalidated continually by

the passage of history. Reinterpretations of Biblical predictions have likewise been rendered untenable time and again as the dates set for the end of this world have been proven false. Because of this it would seem obvious that man must set himself to the task of personally working for the improvement of world conditions; he must cast aside entirely the apparently vain hope that God is to enter the human scene in person to set right the wrongs which men, in their slow struggle towards perfection, still allow to remain in their lives. When all people become convinced that this is their own responsibility, and see that they must work as God's agents to bring the world to Him, then they will have entered into the first stages of the Kingdom of God on earth and the long-predicted millenium will have arrived, without any catastrophic prelude, but through the gradual human progress towards the godly life.

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